



Introducing Appreciative Governance

Guest Editors: **Sallie Lee, Bernard J. Mohr and Cheri Torres**

Inside:

On Human Capacity

**Transitioning to
Appreciative Governance**

**Our Journey: Reflections
on Our Collaboration Studio**

**What is Appreciative
Governance?**

**Sustaining the Effort
Towards Appreciative
Governance**

**Appreciative Governance:
A Summary**

**Organizational Design
Principles for Appreciative
Governance**

**META – Developing
Capacities for Living
Appreciative Governance**

**AI Research Notes:
Transforming Students'
Scholarly Writing**

**Models of Governance:
Learning from Others**

**Appreciative Governance
by Design: A Practical
and Flexible Framework**

**AI Resources:
Books and Articles on
Appreciative Governance**

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Inside:

- 4** **Introducing Appreciative Governance**
by Sallie Lee, Bernard J. Mohr and Cheri Torres
Shares the results of a year-long dialogue about the application of AI to new and more life-giving governance models

- 9** **On Human Capacity**
by Joan Colleran Hoxsey, Sallie Lee, Cheri Torres and Neil Samuels
Insights into the significant mindset shift about what it means to be human in relation to AG

- 13** **What is Appreciative Governance?**
by Bernard J. Mohr, Patti Millar and Dan Saint in collaboration with the AG team
Defines the purpose of governance and offers a comparison of AG with current practices

- 23** **Organizational Design Principles for Appreciative Governance**
by Neil Samuels and Cheri Torres in collaboration with the AG Team
Defines the six principles of AG

- 36** **Models of Governance: Learning from Others: Interviews with Fifteen Thought Leaders**
by Sallie Lee with Interviews conducted by
Joan Colleran Hoxsey, Joep C. de Jong, Neil Samuels and Cheri Torres
Reflections on the dialogue with thought leaders

- 46** **Transitioning to Appreciative Governance: An Invitation to Dialogue**
by Cheri Torres, Dan Saint, Sallie Lee and Bernard J. Mohr
An essay in four voices on moving from traditional governance to AG

- 54** **Sustaining the Effort Towards Appreciative Governance**
by Joan Colleran Hoxsey and Bob Laliberte
Raises challenges in the transition to AG , describing supportive practices and suggestions

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Inside continued:

- 62** META – Developing Capacities for Living Appreciative Governance
by Sallie Lee and Cheri Torres
META forms the building block of appreciative organizations
- 69** Appreciative Governance by Design: A Practical and Flexible Framework
by Bernard J. Mohr
Deep changes are needed in workplace culture as part of the transition to AG
- 76** Our Journey: Reflections on our Collaboration Studio
by Neil Samuels and Cheri Torres
An overview of the year-long exploration, the challenges the AG team faced and their learnings for the future
- 83** Appreciative Governance: A Summary by the AG Team
A synopsis to open the conversation about AG with clients and colleagues
-
- 87** **AI Research Notes**
by Jan Reed and Lena Holmberg
A doctoral writing course remedies gaps in graduate students' experiences in scholarly writing
- 92** **AI Resources**
by Jackie Stavros and Dawn Dole
Books and articles on Appreciative Governance
-
- 96** **About the February 2012 Issue**
Guest Editors: Lena Holmberg and Jan Reed
Making learning the spark of transformation
- 97** **IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information**





Sallie Lee

For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her own consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as a thinking partner, facilitator, and strategist for client groups. She has trained more than 1200 people in the foundations of Appreciative Inquiry around the world.

Contact: sallielee@mac.com



Bernard J. Mohr

Bernard Mohr is cofounder of Innovation Partners International. As thinking partner, consultant and designer, he supports clients within healthcare, manufacturing, retail, pharmaceuticals, education and government in creating sustainable value through flexible and effective work organization, multi-stakeholder networks and shared governance.

Contact: bjmohr@innovationpartners.com



Cheri Torres

A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders. With PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in Collaborative Learning, she has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles.

Contact: ctorres@innovationpartners.com

Appreciative Governance

An introduction

ABSTRACT

Everywhere we turn we see evidence of a need for new governance structures. This issue of the AIP shares the results to date of an on-going inquiry into the principles and practices of Appreciative Governance.

You are about to embark on a unique AIP reading experience! This is not your usual AI Practitioner issue, with articles submitted by various authors related to a particular topic. This issue focuses on a topic of the future – Appreciative Governance. The idea originated in a conversation about the need for new and more life-giving governance models to align with strengths-based organizations. What roles might Appreciative Inquiry (AI) play in the larger structures of governance and how might it inform the designing of governance processes?

To create the articles for this issue, we decided to experiment. Instead of a normal call for papers we put out a call for interest and used a process of face-to-face and virtual collaboration studios, bringing together an international consortium of practitioners referred to throughout this issue of AI Practitioner as the AG Team. In between our studios we conducted research with organizations that we believe have pieces of Appreciative Governance (AG) already in place. We dialogued with proponents of other models of governance and we self governed – not always without controversy or conflict, but in ways that allowed for progress to be made.

Why an Appreciative (New) Governance Model?

In our conversations, experience and research the idea that major change is afoot was evident; there seems little doubt that we are in the process of a significant global paradigm shift. Our current structures and systems have clearly shown their limits. And new possibilities are emerging – even as the old are collapsing around us. Our growing understanding of complexity and intentional living systems is changing the basic premises for what it means to organize, to be human, to work and live on our planet. This new paradigm reinforces that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts and that rather than objective in nature, knowledge and action are subjective, contextual and interwoven. Attention to relationships, processes, networks, growth and development (evolution) is important: these are the essential elements of vitality and sustainable value.

Table 1: A comparison of two system structure models

Industrial Mechanical Model Underlying Metaphysic: Newtonian	Human Systems Ecology Frame Underlying Metaphysic: Quantum
Simple	Complex adaptive systems
Logical	Contextual
Cause and effect	Emergent
Linear	Creative potential
Objective knowledge	Subjective knowledge
Highly structured	Self-organizing
Certain	Ambiguous and uncertain
Top-down	Messy
Discrete parts	Relational
Static	Dynamic and evolving
Periods of change -> stability	Continuous change: from chaos to order to chaos to order



The Wombat - click to watch the video

As AI practitioners, we are well aware of the importance of this shift in mindset because the way we know is fateful. Our understanding of how the world works influences what and how we see, which influences our thinking and ultimately our actions. The five core AI principles underscore this.¹

About the Articles

The results of our collective thinking over this year-long exploration are on the following pages. Although articles have primary authors, everyone on the AG team contributed thinking, research and interview data throughout the issue.

On Human Capacity

The first article offers us insight into the significant shift in mindset about what it means to be human, which is foundational to the new paradigm. The research presented underscores the need for compassion, empathy and love to find their appropriate place in our organizations.

What is Appreciative Governance?

The second article begins by defining the topic, offering a comparison with current organizational practices and providing a detailed description of the purpose of governance and how AG responds to and accomplishes that purpose.

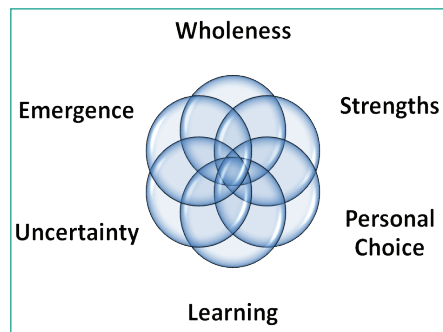
Organizational Design Principles for Appreciative Governance

The third article offers an initial set of principles to guide the intentional design of the structures and processes that capitalize on individual and collective strengths and maximize the capacity of the whole (e.g. appreciative organizations). In this article, we offer six such principles, noting that they are interdependent and mutually inclusive, allowing for the distribution of governance across the organization in ways that support sustainable value.

Organizations interviewed for this article include the following:

Jim Hartzfeld, Managing Director of InterfaceRAISE, Interface Inc,
www.interfaceflor.ca

¹ For more information on the core AI principles, see page 34.



The six design principles of AG

Yvette Jarreau, Director of Leadership, Learning and Development and Karen Gray, Director of Retail and Global Development, Eileen Fisher
www.eileenfisher.com

Ruth Kennedy, VP of Organizational Develop, VF Corp,
www.vcf.com

Jamie Naughton, Speaker of the House Delivering Happiness, Employee Engagement Strategist, Zappo's,
www.zappos.com

John Toussant, former CEO, ThedaCare Health System, Appleton, WI
www.thedacare.org

Models of Governance: Learning from Others: Interviews with Fifteen Thought Leaders

The fourth article makes room for the voices of other thought leaders in the area of alternative governance models, structures and processes. This article reflects the insights, suggestions and contributions that other models can offer in helping to further articulate the AG model.

Thought leaders interviewed for this article include the following:

Franca Baroni, author: On Governance.
www.corpublicum.us/on-governance

Peter Block, author and consultant. Latest book: The Abundant Community. Flawless Consulting
www.peterblock.com

Juanita Brown, founder, The World Café, and author: The World Café: Shaping our Futures through Conversations that Matter.
www.theworldcafe.com

John Buck, Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy, Governance Alive, and author: We the People.
www.governancealive.com/

Maureen McCarthy and Zelle Nelson, The Center for Collaborative Awareness, developers of the Blueprint of 'We': State of Grace document process.
www.stateofgracedocument.co

Stefan C. Peij, President, Governance University, The Netherlands.
www.governanceuniversity.nl

Brian Robertson, HolocracyOne.
www.holacracy.org

Jim Rough, Center for Wise Democracy.
www.wisedemocracy.org

Ken Shepard, Founding President of the Global Organization Design Society, which focuses on the application of Requisite Organization. www.globalro.org

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, School of Government: Lydian Altman, Director, Strategic Public Leadership Initiative; Margaret Henderson, Director,



Teamwork at the Asheville studio

Public Intersection Project; Gordon Whitaker, Professor of Public Administration and Government.
www.sog.unc.edu

Birgitt Williams, Dalar International, developer of Genuine Contact Program.
www.dalarinternational.com

Kim Wright, founder, Cutting Edge Law, Collaborative Law Systems, and author: *Lawyers as Peacemakers: Practicing Holistic, Problem Solving Law*.
www.cuttingedgelaw.com

Transitioning to Appreciative Governance: An Invitation to Dialogue

The fifth article explores the complex move from traditional organizational structures to AG. In this unique article, four members of the team engage in an 'Essay in Four Voices', adapted from Madelyn Blair's work, *Essays in Two Voices*. A number of themes emerge as being important in the transition to AG.

Sustaining the Effort Towards Appreciative Governance

The sixth article offers insight into the challenges the transition to AG is likely to raise, including the leadership and whole system commitment needed to continue to move forward. It offers specific practices and suggestions to support this effort.

META – Developing Capacities for Living Appreciative Governance

The seventh article suggests that Multiple ways of knowing, Engagement, Thinking together and Acting together form the building blocks of appreciative organizations and are fundamental for high performance, innovation and effective collaboration. It describes these capacities and engages the reader in activities to support experiential understanding of the value they play in AG.

Appreciative Governance by Design: A Practical and Flexible Framework

The eighth article provides insight into the deep changes required in the culture of the workplace as part of the transition to Appreciative Governance. It describes a framework and process for achieving this cultural change through the intentional design of policies, practices, structures and processes that capitalize on individual and collective strengths and maximize the capacity of the whole.

Our Journey: Reflections on our Collaboration Studio

The ninth article provides an overview of our year-long exploration, the challenges we faced and our learnings for the future. We invite you into the dialogue related to that future.

Appreciative Governance: A Summary

The final article provides you with a synopsis of this issue so that you can share these ideas with clients and colleagues. It is meant to provide you with a context for conversation and an invitation to others to read this issue and join in the dialogue.

Join the Dialogue



In some of the articles and at the end of the issue there is a link to a LinkedIn group on Appreciative Governance where, if you have a LinkedIn membership, you can join the conversation, offer your thoughts, case studies and insights into the evolution of Appreciative Governance. Try some things and let us know your experience.

Sallie Lee, Bernard Mohr and Cheri Torres
Guest Editors, November 2011

Members of the AG team



Joan Colleran Hoxsey
has over 35 years of experience working with a wide variety of organizations
relationshippresources@fuse.net



Joep C. de Jong
CEO of Van Harte & Lingsma, which develops and delivers programs around (appreciative) leadership and organizational development.
joep.dejong@h-l.nl



Bob Laliberte
uses his engineering and OD background to find strengths in people and implement collaboration to produce superior results.
bob@innovationpartners.com



Sallie Lee
For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her own consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as a thinking partner, facilitator, and strategist for client groups.
sallielee@mac.com



Patti Millar
helps leaders to intentionally create a strong, high-performing culture using research-based tools and development strategies.
patti@coachthink.com



Bernard J. Mohr
Bernard Mohr is cofounder of Innovation Partners International. As thinking partner, consultant and designer, he supports clients within healthcare, manufacturing, retail, pharmaceuticals, education and government.
bjmohr@innovationpartners.com



Dan Saint
has organizational and governance consulting experience serving clients including Intel, Boeing, Lowes, Chrysler, General Motors and the World Bank.
saint@innovationpartners.com



Neil Samuels
His mission: to enable organizations to flourish by helping leaders change their conversations with themselves and their organizations.
neil@profoundconversations.com



Cheri Torres
A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders.
ctorres@innovationpartners.com



Joan Colleran Hoxsey

has over 35 years of experience working with a wide variety of organizations including governmental departments, businesses and private social service agencies. Dr. Hoxsey is currently the President of Relationship Resources LLC. Relationship Resources LLC serves organizations primarily in the tri-state area of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky and beyond.
Contact: relationshipresources@fuse.net



Sallie Lee

For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her own consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as a thinking partner, facilitator, and strategist for client groups. She has trained more than 1200 people in the foundations of Appreciative Inquiry around the world.
Contact: sallielee@mac.com



Cheri Torres

A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders. With PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in Collaborative Learning, she has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles.
Contact: ctorres@innovationpartners.com



Neil Samuels

Neil's mission is enabling organizations to flourish by helping leaders re-discover their strengths, clarify their commitments and fundamentally change the conversations with themselves, their teams and their organizations. He believes that conversations characterized by depth and intensity lead to successful, lasting change.
Contact: neil@profoundconversations.com

On Human Capacity

ABSTRACT

This article offers us insight into the significant shift in mindset about what it means to be human, which is foundational to the new AG paradigm. The research presented underscores the need and potential for compassion, empathy and love to find their appropriate place in our organizations.

'Human communities are only as healthy as our conceptions of human nature.'
The Compassionate Instinct, p. 15

A person's worldview has much to do with how they understand the nature of being; specifically, the nature of human beings. A worldview grounded in limited resources, survival of the fittest and the duality of good and evil yields a pitiful view of human nature. This way of perceiving the world, in fact, conspires to promote negative human behaviors – self-interest, greed, fear and deceit, for example. Instead of pointing to such behaviors as the true nature of humans, we might point to the millions of examples of humans responding to other humans, animals and nature with compassion and generosity, despite the cultural bias to do otherwise.

We might point to the human capacity for goodness and compassion as the true nature of humans. Such diverse ways of seeing our own species may give us pause, at the very least, to question how our personal worldviews influence us in how we operate in the world, what our expectations of others are and what we believe to be possible in human governance.

The darker view of human nature has included a belief that business is about rationality and that compassion, empathy and love are emotional states that lead to irrationality. Therefore, we are warned that compassion and business are not compatible – compassion and empathy will make us soft and, therefore, have no place in corporate life. This way of thinking is being challenged daily and this belief about the overwhelming flaws of human nature and about emotions is now confronted with research to the contrary.

Research pouring out of universities and institutes around the world is showing us that humans are, in fact, just as prone to goodness as to defensiveness and aggression. This research demonstrates that goodness, compassion, kindness

If compassion is natural to the human brain and being, then can it also be encouraged to fuller development and use?
Dr. Daniel Goleman

and the ability to play well with others is a 'core feature of primate evolution.' (Keltner et al.)

Our species has long depended on cooperation to survive, a degree of socialization which requires an innate empathy and compassion for others. Recent studies of compassion argue persuasively for this take on human nature, one that rejects the idea of the preeminence of self-interest.

The research into the positive emotions such as empathy, love and compassion is relatively new. As little as fifteen years ago, the only indicator of positive emotion that had been studied was the smile. Dacher Keltner's research has shown that positive emotions are revealed in many gestures in addition to the smile and that positive emotions are more than the absence of negative emotions (Keltner, 2009).

In his research he has focused on the manifestations of compassion and how they show up physically and neurophysiologically. Using MRI technology, Keltner's research, and that of others, has found significant evidence that compassion has a biologically correlated process that involves the vagus nerve which links the brain, the heart and speech. This suggests that compassion most likely enabled early humans to come together in communities and develop cooperative skills as hunter/gatherers, thereby ensuring their survival and evolution.

A new way of seeing one another

Esteemed scholars and applied business practitioners, such as those listed in the references for this article on page 11 and in the 'AI Resources' on page 92 provide us with a new view of human nature and substantial evidence that a new way of seeing one another is not only rational but essential if we hope to flourish.

Compassion, goodness, AI and the development of Appreciative Governance

What does this have to do with an emerging model of Appreciative Governance (AG)? The whole of AI is built on the idea that strengths added to strengths add up to transformation, whether it be in an individual or in an organization. If human beings have an innate ability to see and feel for the 'other', that is certainly an incredible strength, one sorely needed now in organizations, just as it was needed for early human beings living together in a communal setting. The presumptions that come from seeing human beings in this light are quite different and more affirming than seeing humans as needing to be free of fear in order to be tractable and conciliatory.

The revelations that neuroscience and psychological research are providing allow us to consider governance systems designed to call forth the best in human capacity rather than systems designed to control and suppress negative proclivities.

'If compassion is natural to the human brain and being, then can it also be encouraged to fuller development and use?' This question was posed by Dr. Daniel Goleman as moderator of the day-long 'Conference on Compassion Meditation: Mapping Current Research and Charting Future Directions',

A short list of neuroscientists, psychologists and applied business practitioners providing us with a new view of human nature: Karen Armstrong, Dana Beal, Richard Boyatzis with Annie McKee, Neal Chalofsky, Simon Baron-Cohen, Nora Doherty and Marcelas Guyler, Dacher Keltner, Jason Marsh, and Jeremy Adam Smith.

Compassion is something we all recognize and admire; it has resonated with human beings throughout history, and when we encounter a truly compassionate man or woman we feel enhanced.
Karen Armstrong

sponsored by HH The Dalai Lama at Emory University in October 2010. A series of researchers spoke to this question in presentations throughout the day.

One of the first researchers, Dr. Franz de Naal from the Netherlands, talked about the synchronization that humans are very capable of – that we pick up on the emotions of those around us and even begin to share them in a form of emotional contagion. When we work together and/or live together, it behooves us to be aware that what we feel – our emotions – can and will impact those around us and that we will be impacted by the emotional states of others. This has implications for organizational design and governance, in that what we foster with our structures, policies and practices will either encourage competition, aggression, insecurity, fear, sense of alienation – or, perhaps, cooperation, a sense of safety and belonging, curiosity and interest and enthusiasm.

Other presenters at that conference, including Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, Dr. Matthieu Ricard, Dr. Phillipe Goldin, Richard Davidson, Charles Roison and Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, all spoke to research outcomes showing that we can cultivate compassion in ways that build healthier bodies, relationships, cognitive alertness, willingness to help others, courage and fearlessness. They have found that very short, simple loving kindness meditation practice builds compassion for others, even among foster children who had come from situations where they experienced some form of abuse and loss.



Dr. Barbara Fredrickson presenting at HH The Dalai Lama's Conference on Compassion Meditation at Emory University, October 2010

Building compassion

The building of compassion allows us to connect to others more fully, to be able to experience a collective 'we' and to find the empathy to work out our differences. What if the way our organizations are structured and governed supported the building of greater capacities for compassion, thus a more united, transparent, humane environment where employees feel that they can contribute their best? It is not such a great leap.

AG is grounded in the philosophy of natural systems and community wholeness. Compassion, empathy and love appear to be the glue that supports such relationships and connections. As an instrumental aspect of human nature, it aligns with an underlying assumption in AI that at core, people are good and aspire to contribute in meaningful and significant ways to others and to their communities. Compassion, empathy and love help to build strong bonds and connections between people and they foster a safe and secure environment, freeing people to bring their strengths and their best self into their work.

The collaborative design of governance policies, practices, structures and processes is significantly impacted by this shift in paradigm. Rather than establishing a plethora of rules and policies to rein in negative behavior, this view of human nature allows us to establish a minimum number of rules and policies, those that help to make it easy to contribute, be creative and co-create.

References

- Armstrong, K. (2010) *The Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. NY: Alfred Knopf.
- Baron Cohen, S. (2011) *The Science of Evil: on Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty*. Basic Books.
- Beal, D. (2010) *The Extraordinary Workplace: Replacing Fear with Trust and Compassion*. Black Dog Design.

Boyatzis, R. and A. McKee. (2005) *Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting through Mindfulness, Hope and Compassion*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Chalofsky, N. (2010) *Meaningful Workplaces: Reframing How and Where We Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Doherty, N. and M. Guyler. (2008). *The Essential Guide to Workplace Mediation and Conflict Resolution: Rebuilding Working Relationships*. Kogan Page Ltd.

Goleman, D., Moderator. (October 2010). 'Conference on Compassion Meditation: Mapping Current Research and Charting Future Directions', sponsored by HH The Dalai Lama at Emory University.

Keltner, D., Marsh, J. and J. A. Smith. (2010) *The Compassionate Instinct*. The Greater Good Science Center.

Keltner, D. (2009) *Born to Be Good*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Get 4 issues for the price of 2



**Subscribe to AI Practitioner now and receive
all four 2011 issues of AI Practitioner -
The International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry**

February 2011

Positive and Appreciative Leadership

May 2011

**AI ++: Innovations in AI through the Lens of Australia and
New Zealand**

August 2011

Impact of AI on International Development

November 2011

Introducing Appreciative Governance

Editor: Anne Radford editor@aipracticitioner.com

**Subscribe online at
www.aipracticitioner.com/subscriptions**



[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**Bernard J. Mohr**

Bernard Mohr is cofounder of Innovation Partners International. As thinking partner, consultant and designer, he supports clients within healthcare, manufacturing, retail, pharmaceuticals, education and government in creating sustainable value through flexible and effective work organization, multi-stakeholder networks and shared governance. Contact: bjmohr@innovationpartners.com

**Patti Millar**

As an internal consultant, Patti works with a team of design experts to assess organization culture and capability. She helps leaders to intentionally create a strong, high-performing culture using research-based tools and development strategies. As a researcher and developmental psychologist, Patti investigates the relationship between identity and social influence. Contact: patti@coachthink.com

**Dan Saint**

Dan helps clients lead positive change and growth. He has broad organizational and governance consulting experience serving clients including Chrysler, Intel, Boeing, GM, Navistar, and Lowes and The World Bank. He cofounded and led Deloitte's global ERM practice and has spoken and published internationally on governance, risk and compliance. Contact: dan.saint.phd@gmail.com

What is Appreciative Governance?

In collaboration with the Appreciative Governance Team

ABSTRACT

This article defines Appreciative Governance (AG), offers a comparison with current organizational practices and provides a detailed description of the purpose of governance and how AG responds to and accomplishes that purpose.

Governance is vast as a topic of understanding. This is your invitation into an exploration of how an organization's governance architecture might be reconceived and changed for the benefit all stakeholders. This is a quest, not a journey with a known destination. The end state is still emerging.

We explore:

- What governance has meant traditionally and what we are thinking of when we speak of Appreciative Governance.
- Emerging questions of governance – why change?
- The context for governance: ways of seeing organizations.
- What functions of a living system can (and must) AG address?
- The idea of intentionally designing our governance architectures.
- The leadership challenges.

Beginnings

Governance systems are pervasive. Whenever and wherever people choose to live or work together, governance systems (structures and processes) evolve to guide the functioning of the entity within its environment. These 'governance architectures' have a significant impact not only on an organization's ability to flourish but also on our daily lives within the workplace and on the organization's contribution in the world.

And yet, our collective practice as AI practitioners has spent little time on key questions such as 'what are the life-giving structures and processes which would enhance our capacity to work together in positive, dynamic and generative ways

that enact the purpose of the larger entity in which we live?'. This may require us to let go of long standing views of organizational governance.

As a community of practitioners and global citizens, we believe the concepts, practices, and underlying principles of Appreciative Governance (AG) can be usefully applied to human systems of any size or complexity. However, accountability is a key variable in governance and we see communities, families and even governments as falling into a separate domain based on their different forms of accountability. So, for now we are focusing only on commercial and not-for-profit organizations and networks.

We offer a dramatic contrast between what has been called 'corporate governance' and what we are naming AG, an expanded view of what governance is, and a new way of looking at how, for what purpose and by whom these systems might be designed. While we have not found any organization or network that fully operates on the basis of what we would call an AG architecture, we have found examples of organizations using traditional hierarchical and distributed governance processes. Some are discussed in the article, 'Models of Governance: Learning from Others'.

Traditions of organizational governance

The purpose and function of governance in corporations has been seen primarily as ensuring the legal management of the company in the long-term interests of the shareholders.¹ Not-for-profit governance is similar in concept to corporate governance, but the focus is primarily on maintaining the public trust understood to exist among those executing the mission of the organization and those served.

Traditionally, governance systems have been described through artifacts and actions such as articles of incorporation, partnership agreements, bylaws, board committee and organizational charters, codes of conduct, policy statements and shareholder resolutions. These documents reflect a top-down perspective where a board of directors represents shareholders or stakeholders in an agency relationship. Board authority cascades down through managerial hierarchy.² For many years this worked well.

However, from the Wall Street crash and great depression of 1929 to the massive bankruptcies and criminal conduct characteristic of Enron, MCI/Worldcom and other corporate scandals³, and more recently the 'great recession' of 2008 and onward, the issue of organizational governance has grown in importance for all of us.

1 Historically, the duties of the board involve providing oversight, advice and counsel to management and typically include the following activities: select, evaluate and, if necessary, replace the chief executive officer (CEO), and other principal senior executives; review, provide counsel towards, and where appropriate, approve the corporate strategy, financial objectives and key plans of action; review the adequacy of systems of internal control that reasonably assure the attainment of financial and operational objectives (Godwin and Cooperrider, 2010), reliable financial reporting and compliance with laws and regulations. Also, review and approve changes in accounting principles that are deemed to be material.

2 The structure and action underlying this history emanate from agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) and economic theories, such as a view of the firm as a nexus of contracts (Fama and Jensen, 1983).

3 such as Adelphia Communications, AOL, Arthur Andersen, Global Crossing and Tyco.

Is governance really limited to the work of financial reporting, compliance, corporate strategy and the selection and compensation of executive management?

And issues of conduct have not been limited to commercial organizations. Major not-for-profits such as the Roman Catholic Church, the United Way, the American Red Cross, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the American Cancer Society, and Toys for Tots are among the many organizations which have had senior executives imprisoned and/or fined for various forms of malfeasance (Gibelman and Gelman, 2000).

In some ways, it is not surprising that both commercial and non-commercial established systems of governance are focusing on ultimate accountability. And, of course, within the existing paradigm of 'direct and control', the people assumed to be most able to manage the accountability are those who sit at the top of the pyramid, the board of directors.

But is this the only and best alternative?

We offer here some new ways of thinking about governance.

Traditional view of governance	Appreciative Governance
Emphasizes controlling or preventing behavior that is illegal, unethical or detrimental to the interests of shareholders.	Emphasizes mobilizing or encouraging behavior that is legal, ethical and positive to the long-term interests of shareholders and stakeholders while maintaining a posture of deterrence of behavior antithetical to those interests. AG illuminates and more broadly accesses the organization's strengths, resources and assets.
Views the board of directors as the key actors in governing.	Acknowledges that governance is carried out by all the people in the organization: the board of directors, management and all other employees.
Focuses on board activities of senior management selection and compensation, advising senior management and reviewing accuracy of financial reporting and adequacy of compliance efforts.	Focuses on the range of behavior available from all employees, includes the four AGIL functions of governance and operates with a social constructionist frame.
Begins with a problem-prevention point of view and is advocacy driven.	Begins from a strengths-based perspective and is inquiry driven.

Why change?

The table above implicitly suggests the desirability of moving from left to right. But why?

We live in a shifting world in which ideas once accepted as fact (e.g. the toppling of dictators must always be a bloody process, a black man could never become president of the US) are questioned daily. In this context, questions of opportunity and possibility are being uncovered everyday such as, 'Who is a manager? Is a manager someone with positional authority or someone with the ability to make important decisions and influence others within a given social context?'

Another question is about the scope of governance: is governance really limited to the work of financial reporting, compliance, corporate strategy and the selection and compensation of executive management? Or is governance

Capturing ideas at the Asheville studio



What would it look like if we take the notion of shared governance and expand that to emphasize strengths-based, positive management?

about all decisions that affect how people will collectively organize, establish a purpose, act towards and influence each other, and fulfill their purpose? And if it is the latter, then are those sitting on the organization's board (or even the organization's managers) the only people who govern?

As social constructionists, we see the answers to these questions as always in evolution, with this discourse a part of that evolution. These views of governance reflect what we as humans decide together are the possible ways to organize and behave toward each other in the context of organizations.

Our views emerge through language in relationship with others. Together we generate meaning and sow the seeds of our future. As we learn together, our dialogue evolves and so do our views of governance.

Some ideas arising from these questions have been with us for some time. For example 'shared governance'⁴ is a term used to highlight the distribution of authority and influence that has traditionally been invested in the board and delegated to management. Shared governance is considered progressive because it challenges traditional, hierarchical ideas about what is really happening and what can happen among people when they join together in pursuit of shared goals.

The question being pursued here is this: what would it look like if we take the notion of shared governance and expand that to emphasize strengths-based,

4 Vicki George, RN, PhD, and a Forum for Shared Governance Advisory Board member, puts it this way: 'Shared governance is the structure, shared decision-making is the process, and shared leadership between management and staff is the outcome.' To have a structure to facilitate shared decision-making and shared leadership is to have shared governance,' (<http://sharedgovernance.org/ConfusionAmongConsultants.htm>)

Exploring new forms of governance requires exploring our conceptions of organizations.



Dan Saint contributing to the Asheville studio

positive management, focusing organizational commitments beyond the bottom line; and sustainability within an 'economy and ecology of strengths' (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2010)?

Thinking differently about governance

For the purposes of this article, Appreciative Governance (AG) is the set of all activities that guide the functioning of a human system and its many interdependent parts within its environment. These activities occur within a governance architecture (i.e. structures and processes) that both directs and enables members to set direction or purpose, to make decisions assuring the fulfillment of their purpose, and to set the standards of relationship, behavior and accountability.

This definition is grounded in a different view of governance:

1. A view that assumes governing decisions already occur on a daily basis in all corners of the organization not just in the boardroom. And that while these decisions may not always focus on issues such as strategy, corporate reporting and selection and compensation of executive management, they are clearly decisions which 'guide the functioning of a human system and its many interdependent parts within its environment.'
2. With this expanded view of the 'what, where, when and by whom' of governance activities comes an expanded view of the structures and processes of governance, including many key design choices in a governance architecture – not just the choice of board size and management authority.
3. Additionally, we propose that a participative (re)design of governance structures and processes by all stakeholders is essential since the means and ends of a change process must be compatible. This view is vastly different from a history where the design of governance and control systems has traditionally been almost exclusively the purview of accountants, lawyers and economists responding to negative situations.

Within this much broader view of governance, we include the structure of the board and its relationship to executive management, and we add all the other organizational structures and processes that enable direction setting and decision making in support of the organization's purpose.

In short, we offer a view of governance as 'happening' on a daily basis among people in relationship towards a common purpose. Governance occurs throughout the organization by people at all levels. People engage in setting direction, organizing and acting for the short and longer term within their own areas of accountability.

Ways of seeing: context for Appreciative Governance

Exploring new forms of governance requires exploring our conceptions of organizations. Experience shows that when human systems transcend their challenges rather than simply survive them, the interdependent elements within them flourish, nurture and support one another.

This requires us to conceive of organizations in ways that acknowledge and leverage the attributes of living systems. In their book, *Gaian Democracies*,

The Talcott Parsons' AGIL model describes human activity in a social world:

1. **Adapt** rapidly
2. **Attain Goals**
3. **Integrate** effort
4. Develop **Long-term sustainability**

Madron and Jopling (2003) identify three broad types: engineered, natural and intentional human systems.

Engineered systems are designed to achieve a purpose. Constituent parts exist in a world of direct cause and effect: pull lever A; get result B. When machines break down, the parts can be fixed. Much of traditional governance – and many approaches within management theory, change management and organization design – implicitly adhere to and operate as though the characteristics of engineered systems apply to living systems.

Natural systems include every living organism and combinations of living organisms. Natural systems change, adapt, evolve and regenerate themselves while retaining an essential sense of sameness. A coral reef adapts to the flow of water, but remains a reef. Different from engineered systems, living systems are not only complicated, they are complex. They self-organize and adapt in unexpected ways. Cause-and-effect linear models do not adequately address the complexity of natural systems.

Intentional human systems, like natural systems, adapt, evolve, replicate and are complex. Like engineered systems, they have a purpose; they are organized in order to perform a set of functions. Madron and Jopling differentiate natural systems from intentional human systems by highlighting human agency, our ability to form intentions and take actions. As intentional human systems, organizations are able to grasp the notion of development cognitively and to account for purpose within the framework of change-over-time.

The distinctions Madron and Jopling draw inform our work and situate AG firmly in the context of intentional human systems. All of our organizations and institutions – businesses, schools, governments, orchestras, religious institutions, NGOs, NPOs, terrorist cells and populist uprisings – are intentional human systems.

Systems of governance are concerned with intentional action, development and impact over time. The emerging model of AG offers a path forward for influencing the design of structures and processes such that complexity is accounted for and the focus is placed on maximizing the potential of intentional human systems. (Capra, 1996; Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, 1999).

What functions of intentional living systems can AG address?

In their work on societal functioning, Talcott Parsons (1961) and his colleagues systematically laid out the functions evident in societies around the world. Although Parson was speaking primarily as a sociologist, we propose that the leap to intentional human systems (i.e. organizations and networks) is useful and sensible.

Parsons developed a model (AGIL) to describe and explain human activity in a social world. He proposed that the requisite functions of all intentional human systems are to:

1. **Adapt** rapidly respond to disturbances and fluctuations in the organization's internal or external environment
2. **Attain** a set of goals
3. **Integrate** and coordinate effort, resolving conflict
4. Develop their capacity for **long-term sustainability**

Redesigned governance architecture must be part of a solution to corporate wrong doings.

We propose seeing governance as ALL the decisions and actions that support the four AGIL functions. We suggest that all governance decisions and actions must be in support of these four AGIL functions, and that an organization's structures and processes should enable rather than constrain behaviors in support of those functions.

What do we mean by governance functions compared with structures and processes?

1. By function we mean a purpose natural to or intended for a person or thing. So when we ask what are the functions of governance, we are really asking what are the purposes of a governance system. Our answer is that, in order to survive and prosper, all organizations must accomplish the four AGIL functions: they must adapt, integrate, set goals, and develop capacities that enable sustainability over the long-term. Logically, a governance system must enable the accomplishment of these four functions for the organization to survive and flourish.

2. Organizations use structures and processes to carry out governance functions, where:

A governance structure (or if you prefer, architecture) is an agreed-upon container (holding space) within which the processes and agreements of governing take place, are documented and are disseminated.

To illustrate, a governance structure can be a board, a policy, an information system, a designated role, a grouping (such as a team department or division) or a meeting. All of these can be considered containers for conversations (deliberations and decision making) and data (organizational intelligence). The combination of all of these elements is the governance architecture or organization model. The design choices of the governance architecture greatly influence the organizational culture.

A governance process is a sequence of activities carried out within a structure to achieve the four AGIL functions of governance. Within this view, governance includes all the structures and processes that support the above functions, not just the structure and functions of the board of directors – although that structure and its functions remain important.

The redesign of governance architectures

The practice of AI includes a long history of collaborative design and redesign of an organizations structures and processes (Avital, Boland and Cooperrider 2008; Thatchenkerry, Cooperrider and Avital, 2011).

Building upon this past practice Samuels, Torres et al, in their article 'Organizational Design Principles for Appreciative Organizations and Appreciative Governance' (see page 23), offer six principles to guide the collaborative redesign of governance structures and processes.

These principles provide insight for boards and management inclined towards transparency and engagement of the entire organization.

In 'Appreciative Governance by Design', Mohr proposes one practical process for engaging people throughout the organization in designing their own systems of governance in concert with the greater whole (see page 69).

When a governance architecture (the system of structures and processes) is designed to incorporate the six AG principles:

1. It expands capacity to access all the strengths, resources, assets and capacities of the organization and its environment. This idea has been supported

Exploring potential AI and governance principles



by research in the intersecting domains of Appreciative Inquiry, positive organizational scholarship, positive psychology, design theory and the rise of sustainable enterprises (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2010).

2. It enables productive action in support of the four AGIL functions, posited as essential for an organization to survive and flourish.

Designing an AG system requires raising awareness and informing choice such that the structures and processes of governance are co-constructed with intention.

Some elements of an organization's governance system will be easily discernible because they cause friction and frustration (i.e. the 'squeaky wheel'). However, structures and processes which have historically supported the four AGIL functions are sometimes known only tacitly and require illumination.

The narrative nature of the AI process is well suited to identifying these less visible structures and systems. 'Appreciative Governance By Design' (see page 69) speaks more to the strengths-based design of governance architecture.

The leadership opportunity

Management and leadership come together under the umbrella of organizational governance, including the roles and mechanisms through which organizations set direction, allocate resources and make other important decisions. Repeated corporate governance failures have created a regulatory environment to which leaders are anxious to respond. But rather than new and more laws and regulations, redesigned governance architectures must be part of a solution to corporate wrongdoings.

In his keynote speech at the 2011 Institute of Internal Auditors' International Conference in Malaysia, Robert Haldane Smith made the point that the corporate failures of recent history are about human behavior more than a failure of controls. That may sound obvious, but we miss the point if we interpret him as saying 'this is a problem of bad people'. The fact is that good people in bad systems produce bad behaviors. Fortunately, seventy years of research and

practice in the field of socio-technical system design suggest there is another way forward.

Principles-based redesign of governance architectures shifts the perspective towards encouraging positive behavior and encompassing the broader organization. If the board and management decide to adopt different ways of relating, communicating and governing, they will need to willingly accept change, willingly give up a degree of perceived power, and simultaneously accept the greater perceived risk of establishing trust.

Summary

While governance has historically been seen as the formal responsibility of the board of directors, our discussion here expands this view to include activities that take place throughout the organization, while still recognizing the unique responsibility vested in the board.

We believe that an appreciative focus on the process of governing will deepen our understanding of organizational life and strengthen our ability to intervene effectively in the workings of complex, interdependent systems, enabling them to function in more sustainable and humane ways.

We aspire to support organizations in their ability to create sustainable value – of identifying and bringing to bear capabilities that lie dormant within organizations today – convinced that if we can bring out the best among members, they will thrive and their organizations will flourish.

As AI practitioners, we are committed to a process of discovery and design that taps into the strengths of diverse people joined together toward collective ends – while also supporting those who have ultimate accountability.

References

Avital, M., R. J. Boland, and D. L. Cooperrider. (Eds.). (2008) 'Designing Informations and Organizations With A Positive Lens,' *Advances in Appreciative Inquiry* Vol. 2. Elsevier/JAI, New York.

Buckingham, M. and D. O. Clifton. (2001) *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. New York: The Free Press.

Cameron, K. S., J. E. Dutton, and R. E. Quinn, (Eds.). (2003) *Positive Organizational Scholarship*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*. New York: Anchor Books.

Cooperrider, D. L., and S. Srivastva. (1987) 'Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life.' In R. Woodman and W. Pasmore (Eds.) *Research in Organizational Change and Development* (pp. 129-169). Greenwich: JAI Press.

Eells, R. S. F. (1960) *The Meaning of Modern Business: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Large Corporate Enterprise*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Eisenhardt, K. (1989) 'Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review.' *The Academy of Management Review*, 14 (1), 57-74.

Fama, E. and M. Jensen. (1983) 'Separation of ownership and control.' *Journal of Law and Economics*, J (26), 327-349.

Gibelman, M. and S. R. Gelman. (2000) 'Very Public Scandals: an Analysis of How and Why Nongovernmental Organizations Get In Trouble.' Paper presented at the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) Fourth International Conference, Dublin, Ireland.

Godwin, L. N. and D. L. Cooperrider. (August 10, 2010) 'Positive Organization Development: Innovation-Inspired Change in an Economy and Ecology of Strengths.' Retrieved June 9, 2011, from Appreciative Inquiry Commons: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/comment.cfm>

Madron, R. and Jopling, J. (2003) *Gaian Democracies: Redefining Globalisation and People-Power*. Green Books.

Parsons, T. (Ed.). (1961) *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory* (Vol. 1). NY: Free Press of Glencoe.

Saint, D. K. (2005) *The Firm as a Nexus of Relationship: Toward a New Story of Corporate Purpose*. Dissertation Abstract International, (DAI, 66, no. 07A (2005): p. 2641

Saint, D. K., and C. D. Saint. (2001) 'Evolving Techniques of Corporate Governance: At The Intersection of Organizational Learning and Internal Control.' In G. Bergman (Ed.), *Best Patterns: Erfolgsmuster für zukunftsfähiges Management*. Koln, Germany: Luchterhand.

Seligman, M. E., T. A. Steen, N. Park and C. Peterson. (2005) 'Positive Psychology Progress.' *American Psychologist*, 60 (5), 410-421.

Senge, P. M. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Currency Doubleday.

Thatchenkerry, T., D. L. Cooperrider, M. Avital, (Eds.). (2011) 'Positive Discourse and Appreciative Construction: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Value.' In *Advances in Appreciative Inquiry*, Vol. 3, UK: Emerald.

Watkins, J. M., B. J. Mohr and R. Kelly. (2011) *Appreciative Inquiry : Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Wheatley, M. J., and M. Kellner-Rogers. (1999) *A Simpler Way*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

**Neil Samuels**

Neil's mission is enabling organizations to flourish by helping leaders re-discover their strengths, clarify their commitments and fundamentally change the conversations with themselves, their teams and their organizations. He believes that conversations characterized by depth and intensity lead to successful, lasting change.

Contact: neil@profoundconversations.com

**Cheri Torres**

A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders. With PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in Collaborative Learning, she has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles.

Contact: ctorres@innovationpartners.com



Organizational Design Principles for Appreciative Governance

In collaboration with the
Appreciative Governance Team

ABSTRACT

This article offers an initial set of six interdependent and mutually inclusive principles to guide the intentional design of the structures and processes that capitalize on individual and collective strengths and maximize the capacity of the whole.

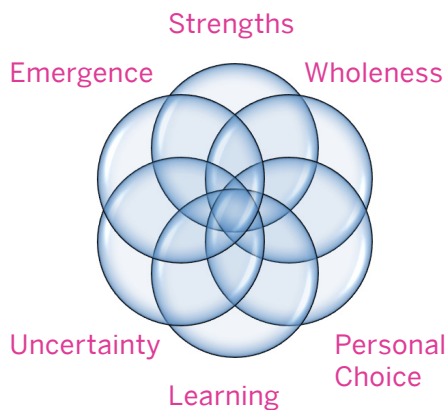
It is one thing to provide a high level overview for a new model of governance, and quite another to implement the practice of that model. We believe a set of design principles are needed: principles that will inform the design of new structures and processes to align with an Appreciative Governance model. In this article, we introduce six principles to guide organizational design that we think will enable Appreciative Governance to take root. For each principle, we offer strategies for actual implementation and provide examples of each principle in action within an organization.

What sets Appreciative Governance (AG) apart from other governance models is three-fold. First, there is an intentional commitment to distribute decision-making throughout the organization. Second, AG capitalizes on individual and collective strengths to achieve the organizational vision and mission. Finally, AG is grounded in human systems theory and social constructionism, which translates into active support of self-organizing systems within organizational boundaries.

We believe leaders of organizations interested in shifting to AG will need a set of principles that supports the intentional and creative design of their organizational structures and processes; designs that allow the organization to capitalize on individual and collective strengths and maximize the capacity of the whole. This means co-creating the structures, systems and practices which express where work is done, what work is done, when it is done, with whom it is done and how it is done.

Through our research, interviews with industry leaders, personal experiences and subsequent AG team dialogue, the following six design principles emerged. We believe that organizations designed to align with these principles will allow for the distribution of governance across self-organizing systems in ways that support excellence and sustainable value.

For more information
about the interviewees,
please see page 34



The Appreciative Governance design principles

These principles are not discrete, nor do they stand alone; rather, together they create the fabric of the system. The principles are interdependent and mutually inclusive.

The strengths principle: People and teams working from strengths maximize productivity, engagement, and creativity – identify, magnify, and connect individual and organizational strengths.

The personal choice principle: People choose the nature and extent of their action – make full engagement and accountability a successful and rewarding choice.

The learning principle: Generating, collecting and transferring new information and knowledge creates value for the organization – practice collaborative inquiry, develop transparent feedback systems, and engage in cycles of action and reflection.

The uncertainty principle: The future is ambiguous and uncertain – improvise using diverse input and collective sense-making.

The emergence principle: Novelty arises in the context of simple interactions – spark the new, encourage curiosity, stay open, and pay attention.

The wholeness principle: We are both whole and part of a greater whole at the same time – maximize connections, ensure transparency and integrate stakeholder perspectives.

What do we mean by 'principle'?

Just as the word governance is not readily distinguished from related terms, like management and leadership, the idea of having 'principles' with which we can test important decisions leads us into deep philosophical waters. The definition we believe is best fit for the task of designing a system of Appreciative Governance is: 'A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.'

Assertions, beliefs, assumptions and values

In contrast, assertions are confident and forceful statements of fact. Beliefs are something one accepts as true or real: firmly held opinions or convictions. Assumptions, similar to beliefs, are things accepted as true or certain to happen without proof, from which a conclusion can be drawn. Finally, values are judgments of what is important in life.

Values are, of course, expressed in the choices that we make about which standards to apply when designing organizations fit for human life. Beliefs can inspire the highest aspirations or fuel the deepest cynicism. And the things we take for granted – our assumptions – may need to be examined, along with the assertions that we make, in the course of governing well.

The six principles of appreciative governance provide key criteria for designing systems, structures and processes that will support the critical examination of the multiplicity of beliefs, assumptions, and values that arise when tackling significant issues.

A principle is a 'fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior for a chain of reasoning.'

We offer these principles to support the intentional design of the structures and processes that underpin appreciative organizations. They are descriptive rather than prescriptive, leaving ample room for choosing strategies that resonate with the organization's vision, mission, values and culture.

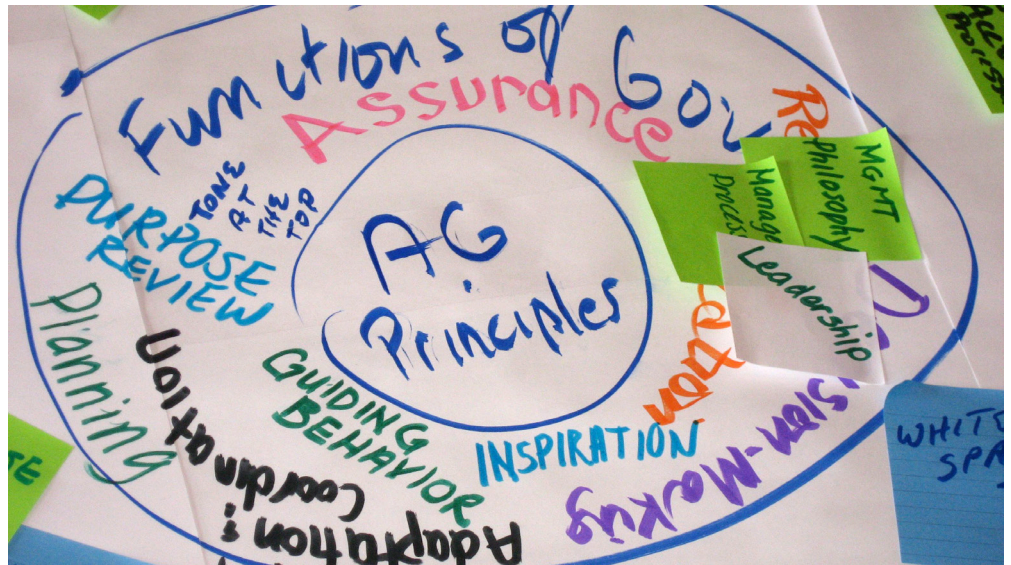
Each principle is defined, followed by a guiding statement. This can be thought of as: this is the principle; therefore, design so that these things happen.

These principles are not an extension of the five core principles of AI¹. They do, however, arise from the same philosophical underpinnings of social constructionism and strengths-based, inquiry-driven organizations.

Detailed descriptions of each of the principles follow. Each description includes strategies for activating the principle and narratives of the principle in action. The methods, practices and tools that are listed in the strategies for activation section are examples of practical ways to achieve the desired outcomes of designing with this principle in mind.

Stories from organizations which have implemented these strategies and/or designed structures or processes that enable this principle to flourish are gleaned from our interviews and experiences, and offer insight into the where, how and why of designing for AG.

AG design principles: key criteria for designing systems, structures and processes.



The strengths principle

People and teams working from strengths maximize productivity, engagement and creativity – identify, magnify and connect individual and organizational strengths

People and organizations come alive when their core strengths are focused on delivery of significant purpose and goals. Governance structures and processes that discover, amplify and weave core character strengths as well as talents, skills and competencies throughout the organization help build energy and capacity for today's delivery and tomorrow's challenges.

1 For more on the core AI principles, go to Appendix B on page 34.

Since all natural systems entail levels of hierarchy, we assume there are natural hierarchies necessary for organizations to deal with their complexities. Aligning strengths within, among and across those hierarchies supports AG.

The principle reinforces a statement Peter Drucker made in a 2003 conversation with David Cooperrider (Cooperrider and Godwin):

'The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths, making our system's weaknesses irrelevant.'

Significant research in the areas of strength and positivity in the workplace underpins Drucker's statement. People have greater creative capacity and greater access to critical thinking as well as improved physical and psychological well-being when they are working from strengths in a positive environment.

Research shows that one of the most effective and sustainable routes to improved performance is acknowledging and reinforcing good performance and identifying strengths and how they can be used even more effectively in the workplace (Conkright; Fredrickson; Rock and Tang).

Strategies for activating the strengths principle

Encourage individuals and teams to use tools that identify strengths, such as the VIA Survey of Character, StrengthsFinder and Realise2.

- Design work processes and roles around identified strengths
- Initiate learning programs that focus on strengths and guide individuals in magnifying them in the context of their current and future roles
- Develop performance management systems that focus more on strengths and future possibilities and less on gaps and 'opportunities for improvement'
- Develop or enlist effective assessment tools that support the identification of strengths and skills; ensure that people are in positions where they can use their strengths, and they are stretched in ways that help them grow
- Promote people into positions that align with their strengths and competencies and provide them with the training and tools that enhance their capability.

Narratives of the strengths principle in action

Eileen Fisher Eileen Fisher established a 'facilitating leader team,' members of which are charged with facilitating the development of future company leaders by working with them to identify and use their strengths and passions. Roles are often developed or evolved in alignment with an individual's passions or interests and the structure of the organization is adjusted to fit their strengths and expertise.

The 'review' process named the Development Dialogue is focused on key learnings and development opportunities; its purpose is to stimulate a thoughtful conversation about development and growth.

Ownership encourages greater engagement and innate accountability.

The personal choice principle

People choose the nature and extent of their action – make full engagement and accountability a successful and rewarding choice

Personal choice is about using one's discretion and making informed choices, acting upon those choices, and then being accountable for the consequences. When people have the information and competence necessary to make good decisions and are free to do so, they feel empowered. They act with greater confidence, speed, and agility resulting in improved productivity and often improved performance. Such agency invites ownership, which in turn encourages greater engagement and innate accountability.

Connection, involvement, enthusiasm and accountability, when rewarded and encouraged, lead to the empowerment of employees. Empowerment is an important factor in the success of individuals and organizations. However, empowerment comes from within; an organization cannot empower someone. It can, however, intentionally provide people with the tools, knowledge, training and encouragement needed to make decisions that align with what is in the best interests of the organization. When people begin to act from this place of autonomy, and they succeed and are rewarded, they develop a sense of empowerment.

AG structures and processes make effective decision-making and choices natural at every level throughout the organization. Individuals and groups have access to relevant information and the appropriate professional development and training that enables them to make good decisions and choices.

People are held accountable for their decisions, and accountability means learning from actions and outcomes in order to grow in one's ability as a member of the organization. Overall, this contributes to effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace and rapid response to local issues, which is often a face-to-face interaction with a customer or client.

People are inherently good and seek to contribute. Appreciative Governance arises from that premise.



Employees have access to the relevant information and training that allow them to add value through design thinking, problem-solving and appropriate risk-taking.

Strategies for activating the personal choice principle

- Ensure organizational transparency of financial and operational data
- Provide training in problem-solving strategies
- Offer training to improve individual and group decision-making skills
- Provide training to improve listening and inquiry skills
- Establish group practices in dialogue and reflective practice
- Integrate personal and professional development through the organization
- Clearly delineate and articulate levels of management, roles, responsibilities, and accountability

Narratives of the personal choice principle in action

Zappos Zappos ensures that every employee fully understands and appreciates the principles of the organization and then turns them loose in their job to manifest those principles in serving their customers. There is one example of this principle at work that turns out to have had a significant impact on the company's profit.

One of the Zappos principles is the Wow Principle; Zappos wants every customer to experience a 'wow' when dealing with Zappos. One call center person fielded a request from a woman whose mother had recently died; she wanted to return a pair of shoes her mother had never worn.

Zappos has a no questions asked return policy, but the call center employee went one step further. He told her he suspected she had her hands full of more important things to do than send back a pair of shoes and that she should just put them outside the front door and he'd take care of it.

The company paid the extra \$15 to have UPS pick up the shoes, package and return them. In his zest to truly 'wow' the customer, he went one step further. He requested permission to send flowers, which was granted. This woman received a bouquet of flowers with condolences and warm wishes from the Zappos family.

The learning principle

Generating, collecting and transferring new information and knowledge creates value for the organization – practice collaborative inquiry, develop transparent feedback systems, and engage in cycles of action and reflection

Governance and control are dependent on the learning capability and capacity of the organization. Learning is integral to AG processes and structures, being a primary strategy to continuously and rapidly move toward strategic outcomes. Learning takes place within the context of measurable goals supported by transparent feedback systems enabling adaptation, rapid course correction and innovation.

Rapid prototyping with stakeholder input and system feedback can allow employees to learn from their decisions and achieve results more efficiently and effectively. To achieve this, employees have access to the relevant information

Appreciative organizations expand the capacity to mitigate risk and respond to opportunity.

and training that allow them to add value through design thinking, problem-solving and appropriate risk-taking.

Collective knowledge grows when employees have regular opportunities for reflection. Communication practices, such as dialogue, support collaborative inquiry and reflective practice. By keeping AG structures and processes aligned with openness, mutual respect, trust, transparency and listening, people are free to share their perceptions and challenge information and assumptions, both of which are at the heart of learning.

Strategies for activating the learning principle

- Create agile processes, which complement prototyping strategies. These are regular, short (often stand up) meetings designed to act, assess, learn, modify and improve in rapid succession
- Practice After Action Reviews (AAR), a strategy that originated in the US Army. At its most basic, an AAR brings teams together to learn using three simple questions: 1) what was supposed to happen; 2) what actually happened; and 3) what did we learn.
- Integrate action learning circles into workplace practices. Small, diverse, democratic groups meet regularly over a specified period of time. The goal is deeper understanding and efforts are often directed towards the construction of a final product or recommendation for a course of action.
- Establish Communities of Practice (COP) whenever you are integrating new programs or policies. In an organization, COPs form with the goal of gaining knowledge related to their area or a new practice they are implementing. People share stories and develop expertise, learning from one another.
- Provide training for managers and supervisors in facilitation of learning circles and dialogue to support successful learning conversations, making it safe for people to take risks, speak up and share information.

Narratives of the learning principle in action

VF Corporation uses a design thinking/learning model for new projects or policies; they call them 'conference room pilots.' These projects or policies are designed to go out with 'light decisions' before final decisions are made, very similar to prototyping in the world of design science. They meet and work with stakeholders who will be impacted by the project or policy in order to learn, gather feedback and input so that final decisions are more likely to achieve desired results.

The uncertainty principle

The future is ambiguous and uncertain – improvise using diverse input and collective sense-making

We live in a world characterized by complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity buffeted by forces outside of our direct control or influence. In addition, the magnitude of ever-expanding information exceeds our ability to process and account for it. Diverse and often conflicting interpretations abound. Gaining agreement on a path forward can be difficult.

AG makes room for uncertainty until new patterns emerge.

In such a world, AG structures and processes maximize stakeholder input, enable sense-making conversations within and between levels, support collaborative thinking and facilitate rapid prototyping and fast learning as a means to achieve excellence. AG encourages informed 'best guesses' and treats actions as experiments. Reasonable decisions made quickly are enriched by fast-cycle feedback followed by real-time adjustments, saving time and money. Through openness and continuous learning, organizations expand the capacity to mitigate risk and respond to opportunity.

Strategies for activating the uncertainty principle

- Appreciative Inquiry Summits
- Open Space Technology
- Scenario planning
- Reflective dialogue
- Collaborative inquiry
- Design science
- Information visualization tools
- Simulation programs
- World Café

Narratives of the uncertainty principle in action

Every team at ThedaCare Health Systems holds a stand-up meeting daily to anticipate problems and plan actions. Thus, every day offers an opportunity to learn and adjust based on what worked the day before.

ThedaCare created Rapid Improvement Events in which a cross-sectional team comes together (including patients and community) for a week to improve a process needing improvement.

Eileen Fisher has a process to actively listen to customers, wholesalers, retailers, suppliers and the community and incorporate what they hear into strategy and resource allocation. They have a flexible plan for international expansion that accounts for uncertainty in the strategic planning process: to listen and adapt based on timely, relevant learning.

A philosophy of trying things out and learning from that experience is foundational to the company. Flexibility is the basis of this philosophy; expansion of what works and learning from what doesn't flows from this flexibility. An expression reflective of the culture is 'we're in the river.' This means there is flow, continual evolution and change as we see what emerges as important and appropriate for action.

The emergence principle

Novelty arises in the context of simple, open interactions – spark the new, encourage curiosity, stay open and pay attention.

The interaction of people in a complex system often taps into unexpected, surprising intelligence which emerges from the collective connection. Beyond

'Wholeness' refers to the inclusive, ever-evolving coherence of the organization and its various parts.

traditional learning, there is the opportunity for new knowledge to arise out of simple discourse when inquiry and curiosity or wonder dominate. An organization that emphasizes connection, continuous experimentation and whole system thinking coupled with an openness to challenging taken-for-granted assumptions will see and be able to act on possibilities outside the accepted limitations of a problem.

When organizations design with the emergence principle in mind, they create structures and processes that support a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions where openness and inquiry are encouraged and rewarded and place a high value on dialogue and thinking together. For the organization to benefit from the emergent ideas and actions they must also design practical ways to notice, acknowledge and harvest what emerges. Appreciative governance makes room for uncertainty until new patterns emerge and rewards the ability to notice and name patterns as they begin to emerge.

Strategies for activating the emergence principle

- Establish routine times for thinking and reflecting together and alone.
- Integrate silence into meetings.
- Use different thinking strategies (brainstorming, lateral thinking, divergent thinking), creative movement and art to engage creativity and expand possibilities.
- Offer professional development that fosters an open mind, open heart and open will; listening capacity; mindfulness; dialogue.
- Develop collaborative learning skills, a dialogical process to generate new knowledge in which groups engage in cycles of action and reflection around a topic to understand how ways of knowing influence our understanding of a topic and possibilities for action.
- Provide training for managers and supervisors that supports their capacity to ask positive provocative questions and sponsor open dialogue, prototyping and innovation.

Narratives of the emergence principle in action

Interface Inc. Interface Inc. encourages dialogue and inquiry during their quarterly community status sessions. On one such occasion, a single mother who operated a cupping machine asked how she could get involved with the Climate Neutral program, which was a company effort to match CO₂ emissions with investment in international efforts to reduce carbon output in the world.

At first people thought she was asking the company to offset her gas consumption, but she explained that she was interested in finding a way to contribute herself to carbon reduction in order to offset the gas she used driving. What emerged was a whole new concept and program at Interface Inc. – a way for employees to opt into the company Climate Neutral program.

The wholeness principle

We are both whole and part of a greater whole at the same time – maximize connections, ensure transparency and integrate stakeholder perspectives.

'Wholeness' refers to the inclusive, ever-evolving coherence of the organization and its various parts, and of the relationship dynamics among those parts. The principle of wholeness acknowledges that individual autonomy and action exist within a complex network of relationships. The success of the organization depends upon the health and well-being of individuals as well as their capacity to include and engage with others in service to the whole.

Margaret Wheatley summarized this beautifully in her book *Leadership and the New Science*:

'I cannot describe a person's role, or his or her potential contribution, without understanding the network of relationships and the energy that is required to create the work transformations that I am asking from that person. No longer can I define the person only in terms of his or her authority relationship to me. I need to be able to conceptualize the pattern of energy flows that are required for that person to do the job.

If I can do this, I then see the person as a conduit for organizational energy, as the place where sufficient resources meet to make something happen. It gives me a very different perspective on what I must do to support that person and what is required to make the whole organization work at transformative energy levels.'²

Appreciative Governance structures and processes designed with the wholeness principle in mind make visible the connections and energy Wheatley discusses. They attend not only to the formal structure of the organization – the lines and boxes of an organization chart – but also the white space between those boxes where conversations occur and work often gets done. They support transparency and inclusion and help people see their role in relation to others: their team, department or function as well as the organization in its entirety and stakeholders in the wider community. They inspire a unity of spirit and commonality of language and story that catalyzes action. They focus attention on the impact the organization has on its communities and beyond.

Strategies for activating the wholeness principle

- Initiate innovative social networking programs that facilitate easy connection and collaboration
- Make data and information transparent: develop widespread sharing of financial and operational data and provide business literacy training so everyone understands the data
- Create scorecards that include measures of the triple bottom line
- Facilitate AI Summits, which include a broad spectrum of the organization, for change management, planning and whole system decision-making
- Provide training that ensures that everyone understands the organization's purpose, mission, goals and objectives, and how their work contributes and aligns

² Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, p. 71.

- Create and protect time and space for reflective conversations and dialogue among diverse stakeholders
- Establish performance objectives and reward systems with both individual and team components (where appropriate)
- Include broad stakeholder participation in planning and learning processes
- Create an effective and facile organizational structure that is capable of responding to varying levels of complexity
- Ensure a culture of trust and mutual respect

Narratives of the wholeness principle in action

Interface Inc. holds quarterly meetings with all shifts to inform and seek input on their 2020 vision of Mission Zero. This company also uses story-telling narrative with the myth of the Hero's Journey to engage everyone in their 2020 vision of Mission Zero.

Conclusion

The structures and processes of governance play a central role in determining whether organizations die, survive or flourish. The choice of the principles on which to design those elements is a fateful one. Given our growing knowledge of human systems and changes in our understanding about the way the world of living systems works, it makes sense to design organizations to align. We believe that new design principles that support organizational alignment with natural systems will enable organizations to not only generate sustainable value, but also flourish in today's global, complex, uncertain world.



This article introduces our current best thinking around organizational design principles that will support Appreciative Governance. We look forward to furthering this dialogue with those of you who are interested. Join the [LinkedIn](#) dialogue.

References

- Cooperrider, D. L. and L. N. Godwin. (2010) 'Positive Organization Development: Innovation-inspired Change in an Economy and Ecology of Strengths.' Draft Paper on AI Commons, http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/IPOD_draft_8-26-10.pdf
- Cooperrider, D. L. and S. Srivastva. (1987) 'Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life'. In R. Woodman, and W. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Change and Development*. Greenwich: JAI Press. (pp. 129-169).
- Fredrickson, B. (2009) *Positivity*. N.Y.: Crown Publishers.
- Fry, R. and F. Barrett. (2005) *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity*. Taos Institute Publications.
- Rock, D. and Y. Tang. (2009) 'The Neuroscience of Engagement,' *NeuroLeadership Journal*, Issue 2, 15-22.
- Wheatley, M. J. (1992). *Leadership and the New Science*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Whitney, D. and A. Trosten-Bloom. (2003) *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler

Appendix A: Organizations interviewed

To enrich our thinking process in clarifying the principles we interviewed a number of organizations that have established a reputation for having a strengths-based framework, are moving towards a systems approach to governing, and are successfully engaging the whole in their vision and mission. We looked for diversity in the types of industries, and tracked structures and processes that spanned all organizations:

Yvette Jarreau, director of Leadership, Learning and Development and Karen Gray, Director of Retail and Global Development at Eileen Fisher. Eileen Fisher is an international women's clothing manufacturer with 37 stores and annual sales that exceed \$250 million, a third of which is now employee-owned. Eileen Fisher raises the bar within the industry through a visible commitment to sustainability and social consciousness.

Jim Hartzfeld, managing director of InterfaceRAISE at Interface Inc., the largest modular carpet manufacturer in the world with almost 4,000 employees and an annual revenue of \$1 billion. They have developed a reputation for using the power of narrative and empowered employees to create sustainable value for all stakeholders as they move towards a zero carbon footprint.

John Toussaint, former CEO at ThedaCare, a healthcare organization with four hospitals, 22 physician locations, residential facilities for senior citizens and multiple locations for ThedaCare At Home, ThedaCare At Work and ThedaCare Behavioral Health Services. ThedaCare has redesigned the way it does business, moving it to a second curve model of health care. They serve more than 150,000 people each year.

Ruth Kennedy, director of Organizational Development at VF Corporation, an international clothing manufacturing organization with 46,000 employees in 150 countries and annual revenue of more than \$7 billion. They are committed to partnership and relationship-based operations and inspiring engagement and ownership throughout the system.

Jamie Naughton, Speaker of the House Delivering Happiness and Employee Engagement Strategist at Zappo's. Zappo's is an online discount quality shoe store with more than 2000 employees and annual revenue of more than \$1 billion. They have a reputation for empowering employees to 'wow' customers.

Appendix B: The core principles of AI

The principles of Appreciative Governance are distinctly different from the core principles of Appreciative Inquiry. The former are intended to support the intentional design of structures and processes of an organizational governance system.

These do not replace the five AI Principles, which are principles of a different nature. The core AI principles are more like 'a general scientific theorem or law that has numerous special applications across a wide field.' The core principles are at work whether one is practicing AI or not.

Farming serves as a good metaphor.

Regardless of the specific kind of farm one chooses to design, the laws of nature apply (core AI principles). However, the criteria by which one would choose exactly where to place what varieties of crops and/or animals (AG principles) can differ significantly.

Consider the difference between two neighboring farms. The first is a large, mono-species factory farm using chemical fertilizer and growing nothing but soybeans.

The second is a family-run organic farm growing a wide variety of crops as well as raising chickens, pigs and beef using the waste from each species as fertilizer for something else.

Both grow under the same sun and receive the same rain but the latter aligns with nature's principles and therefore more likely to flourish in the long-term; the former delivers short-term profit, but long-term exhaustion.

As background for those who might not be familiar with the core principles, here they are in summary form:

The constructionist principle Meaning and social reality are co-created through language and conversation. Knowledge and organization destiny are interwoven. We experience the world we describe.

The simultaneity principle Inquiry is intervention. Change begins the moment the first question is asked.

The poetic principle Organizations are like poems and books. We can read almost anything into any them.

The anticipatory principle Imagination inspires action. Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. Deep change occurs first in our images of the future.

The positive principle The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action; the more positive the question, the greater and longer-lasting the change.

In addition to five core AI principles, other practitioners have subsequently proposed additional principles, which enhanced our thinking about AG.

Wholeness Understanding the whole story (which is never singular) brings out the best and provides more expansive thinking than reductionism. Note that this definition of 'wholeness' differs markedly from that proposed for AG (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom).

Enactment Acting 'as-if' is self-fulfilling. Transformation occurs by living in the present what we most desire in the future. Embody what you want (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom).

Free choice People and organizations thrive when people are free to choose the nature and extent of their contribution. Note that we have expanded on this principle in our work on AG (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom).

Awareness A principle for bringing AI into one's life. Becoming self-aware, other-aware and socially aware of the dynamics of the relationships in a community. Surfacing assumptions is important in good relationships (Stavros and Torres).

Narrative We construct stories about our lives. Stories are transformative (Fry and Barrett).





Sallie Lee

For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her own consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as a thinking partner, facilitator, and strategist for client groups. She has trained more than 1200 people in the foundations of Appreciative Inquiry around the world.

Contact: sallielee@mac.com



Models of Governance: Learning from Others

Interviews with 15 Thought Leaders and Practitioners

Interviews conducted by: Joan Colleran Hoxsey, Joep C. de Jong, Neil Samuels and Cheri Torres

ABSTRACT

This article reflects the insights, suggestions and contributions that other models can offer in helping to further articulate the AG model.

Interviewing colleagues

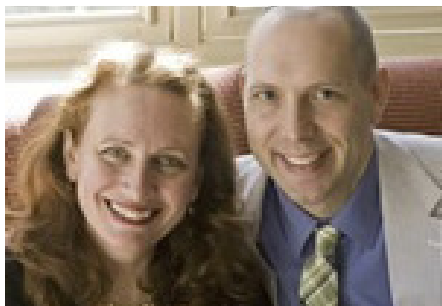
The idea of formulating a new model of governance is daunting, especially since there is so much work going on in this domain already around the world. New theories and practices are springing up all over, so much so that those of us who self-selected to work on a concept of Appreciative Governance (AG) kept asking ourselves: Where do we fit? Where does AI fit? What works with AI principles? What would an organization fully designed with AI principles look like? What might the design process look like?

We are still at an early point with our inquiry into what Appreciative Governance could look and feel like if we were immersed in it, living in it. We have read extensively and talked to colleagues about this compelling idea of governing differently – more holistically and humanely, more elegantly and innovatively, more collectively and intelligently.

The interviews featured in this article took place over late spring and summer of 2011, each one pushing us to rethink our conclusions and framework, each one teaching and challenging us to go deeper, each one a contribution to our thinking and of course, to our governed world. This was, from its inception, not intended to be an academic article with critical analysis and comparisons of perspectives; it was and is an outreach to others working in the field of human systems and governance, an outreach to discover resonance.

You will see some names we all recognize, because of the reach and applicability of their work; others you encounter here are better known within the niche of their specialties. The criteria for selection in this case was that one of us knew the interviewee, had been in touch with them sometime during our research period or we thought would have interesting perspectives for us to draw on.

More info about the interviewees can be found in the References section, and the full interview answers to Questions 1-3 can be downloaded [online here](#).



Maureen McCarthy and Zelle Nelson



Birgitt and Ward Williams

As it turned out, we talked to people whose expertise or focus falls into 3 different areas:

1. Models of governance

Distinct frameworks for the way governance structures unfold throughout an organization. These models have been designed to bring something to or replace standard governance structure and practice. For this issue, we spoke to:

- John Buck about applications of Dynamic Governance (Sociocracy)
- Ken Shepard about Requisite Organization
- Brian Robertson on Holacracy, and
- Jim Rough on Wise Democracy

2. Technology of conversation/dialogue design

Processes that can be used in 'temporary governance situations or events,' of visioning, strategic planning, whole system conversations and alignment. They have been used on their own or in combination to create containers of full voice, openness and learning where collective intelligence and alignment can emerge.

For these interviews, we had the opportunity to talk with:

- Juanita Brown, who developed the World Café process
- Birgitt Williams, who with her husband Ward, brought us the Genuine Contact program; and
- Maureen McCarthy and Zelle Nelson, who birthed the Blueprint of WE Collaboration Document (you may know it by its original name, the 'State of Grace' document) format and process

An interesting aspect of the conversations with this group was the assertion made by a couple of them that their technology could be scaled up to inform governance structures and design of the entire organization.

Questions of scalability are raised in relation to the point at which method becomes organizational design and where ways of working together can morph into full-blown organizational governance models.

Birgitt and Ward Williams, along with their more than 30 co-owners of the Genuine Contact program (GC) have used the principles and processes of GC to design their company, creating structures and decision making processes that fit the model. They even sought a legal framework that aligned with the way they view how people can best co-create and co-govern.

In addition, Birgitt pioneered the use of Open Space Technology (OST) in a Canadian organization she directed in the 1990s, using the principles and method as the foundation for the way teams and the whole organization worked together and made decisions.

Maureen McCarthy and Zelle Nelson have been offering a format for developing Collaborative Awareness, creating agreements and ways of working between two or more individuals through the Blueprint of WE Collaboration Document



Kim Wright



Sallie Lee, Cheri Torres and Juanita Brown, near Asheville, North Carolina, USA, where they all live

(the 'State of Grace' document). Over the years, they have discovered that the new ways of contracting how we show up with one another and what our expectations are can be applied to teams, departments – to any groupings at all. This has led them to focus their work with organizations, using the Blueprint of WE Collaboration process throughout systems as the way people come to understand and collaborate with one another. This could be the kind of question our third category of interviewees take on.

3. Theory of governance contributors

Taking perspective on various models, assessing what is emerging in theory and practice. Two universities are represented in this grouping. We spoke to Lydian Altman, director, Strategic Public Leadership Initiative; Margaret Henderson, director, Public Intersection Project; Gordon Whitaker, professor of Public Administration and Government at the University of North Carolina School of Government; and Stefan Peij, president of the Governance University in the Netherlands.

In addition, we talked to two attorneys: Franca Baroni, who has created for the first time a philosophical foundation for heart wisdom to be an integral part of governance and law; and Kim Wright of Cutting Edge Law, a global leader in the development of collaborative legal structures and practices. We were also able to tap the wisdom of Peter Block, expert on workplace and community alignment.

Our deep thanks to those interviewees who very generously took the time to read versions of our work in conceptual form, provide comments and questions, then walk us along their own thought/experience pathways. We are also grateful for their expressions of enthusiasm for what we are attempting and the widespread willingness to stay in dialogue into the future. We heard over and over: Let's keep talking. Keep me in the loop on this. Let's find synergies. This is important.

Conducting these interviews had one result for all of the AG team – we immediately wanted to do more!! When comparing notes, the interviewer team's most common comment was: 'I had such a great conversation! I'd like to have more time with this person and, now, I want to talk to...'

The interviews

The interviews followed the same basic interview guide, which has been inserted below. The 9 questions allowed us to take off in different directions with our colleagues and explore their passions and central ideas.

Impetus/direction

1. What took you in the direction of your work? What was the impetus that caused you to dedicate yourself to this?
2. How did this model or theory develop? What issues were you (and/or other developers) trying to get at? What were you and others seeking to contribute?

Principles of model/process

3. In your view, what lies at the heart of your model/work/process? What are the core principles that inform your approach?
4. As you reflect on each of the design principles we forwarded you, please share which, if any, of these principles might guide your own structures and processes, how you bring the principle alive and how it impacts the overall success of individuals, teams and the whole.

We're at a cross point that is significant for all generations to come. We must choose what is life-nurturing, must do this work well. These are models of operating for humanity – bigger than any one method. Birgitt Williams, Genuine Contact Program

5. (If not already answered in the course of conversation) When you look around you at the challenges and opportunities of the time we live in, what do you think are the most important shifts we need to make in how people come together/work together on issues of importance, or even on organizational missions?

Governance

6. How does your work deal with/inform organizational governance? What are the most crucial aspects of governance for you for our time in history? (This can refer to only organizational or to a more general consideration of governance.)

7. For you, what is the most important contribution that your work/model/process is making to organizational/community success? Governance at the organizational or community level?

Wrap up and insights

8. Given how our conversation has unfolded today, what strikes you as the most important themes or ideas we hit on?

9. What do you want to make sure those of us working on the AG process do not forget or leave out?

Overall themes that emerged

Talking with this group of experts was both humbling and exhilarating. Aside from offering us a window into their work, our colleagues offered us insights into AG. They questioned the way we configured the emerging six AG principles, questioned definitions of our terminology, pointed out biases and improved the way we were expressing basic AG concepts. We discovered a powerful brain trust of committed thinkers who helped us reframe our thinking over and over, and pointed out the connections among the types of work we are doing. Those contributions show up throughout this issue of AI Practitioner. Below are other shared themes that emerged in our far-reaching conversations:

Our work and principles are related

Overall, those interviewed felt that we are all contributing to related emergent forms of governance; we are just coming at it from different directions and disciplines. We are all working in alignment, designing and developing to increase possibilities for democracy, collaboration, full voice, connection, clarity of decision making and ever more ability for people to work together successfully.

As the interviews unfolded, those of us on the interview team could feel the collective intelligence at work. We could also see, along with our interviewees, ways that the sets of principles we have adopted or discovered in our different areas of focus have many overlaps, even though they may be described in quite different vocabularies. Throughout, though, there was the expression of a strong belief in human capacity for good and for growth toward life-nurturing ways of organizing ourselves.

Juanita Brown provided us with a beautiful image of the movement we find ourselves participating in:

'My grandmother's house in Mexico had a central courtyard with a covered walkway and open archways around it. You could enter the central garden through any of the archways. There is something about collective intelligence

The real purpose of the legal system is to help us design, manage and heal relationships. Kim Wright

that is independent of any particular doorway, i.e. AI, Open Space, World Café, sacred circles – once we enter that space, we all know it. Whatever doorway enables us to enter that space will help us to get through the night. It's a dark night. We need this at the level of human relationships – to bring our authentic humanity to bear on collective understanding and committed action.'

Wholeness

One concept in organizational design and governance showed up in every interview: the trend toward wholeness/full voice/inclusion/involvement. Organizations have found that they cannot institute change, move quickly or innovate unless they overcome the lethargy brought on by fragmentation and separation. This adaptable, holistic nature, so essential to the creation of sustainable value, is a prime quest for AG. A fundamental challenge for AG is how we hold the concept of wholeness when organizations and communities may be so large, diverse and dispersed that considering wholeness in the equation of governance can boggle the mind, at least at first glance. Here are some reflections from our interviewees on wholeness:

Whitaker, Altman and Henderson:

How do you determine the grasp of the principle of wholeness? The members of a group or organization have to decide what they want to be with and for each other. In coming together to work on a shared concern, there is a spectrum of involvement to be defined. How are stakeholders involved in determining participation, direction, decision-making and resource allocation? How will they share control? How will they hold each other accountable? These decisions can happen organically, but group members might operate under very different expectations if they don't have an explicit conversation to design their collective intention.

Brown

The egalitarian aspect of all these forms gives voice and choice. You are creating a systemic architecture of engagement. There's a logic to building something like this – using intentional infrastructures of engagement.

Shepard

Wholeness in systems thinking is inherent in our approach, all in an environment that requires and supports quality dialogue. Bullying, micromanagement and all forms of dysfunctional management must be driven out so that true dialogue is possible in well-structured, staffed and managed situation. Levels V, VI and VII of Requisite Organization increasingly engage the global environment. Requisite Organization is a governance system – the only management system that is well researched and proven – dealing with the whole organization rather than, say, just the operating core, and aligning all parts of the system – structure, staffing, managerial practices, compensation and its decision dialogue processes.

Baroni

Now we realize we need to include heart intelligence as the guiding principle to organize at the collective level. We ought to deeply listen to the intention of the organization and genuinely involve all members of

Seeing your strengths helps me pull on mine, creating ongoing, triggering awareness of strengths. McCarthy and Nelson

the organization. It is key to realize that every person has heart wisdom to share and thus something important to contribute.

Rough

The Wisdom Council essentially allows the range of Dynamic Facilitation to be extended to include all the people of organizations and large systems.

Strengths

If there is a focus on the importance of whole system design, an emphasis on strengths is not far behind, in the thinking of our interviewees. There is a growing awareness that pulling forward people's strengths is essential to organizational engagement and productivity. The interviewees made this clear:

Shepard

Requisite Organization emphasizes the minimum feasible number of organizational levels, staffing that fits individual capability with the level of work complexity in the role, all in a way that allows individuals to stand fully upright in their roles and to apply their full capability.

Rough

Dynamic Facilitation (within Wise Democracy) is a way of helping people come into an environment where everything that is said or thought is an asset. It is a way of circling around an issue that may seem impossible, then using everything – every emotion, thought or objection expressed – as a way to help people create a breakthrough.

McCarthy and Nelson

The key to Collaborative Awareness – when I know your strengths, I can help pull them forward, on behalf of the organization – is strengths connecting to wholeness. Seeing your strengths helps me pull on mine, creating ongoing, triggering awareness of strengths.

Block

All transformation is about crossing the bridge from hell to heaven, and that recognition 'I am not my deficiencies' – Peter Kestenbaum talks about the fact that all human beings are hoping to cross that bridge that moves us from loneliness and lack of meaning to a sense of having something to offer.

A couple of themes repeated over several interviews will figure in our ongoing research into the most important aspects of organizational design and governance to bring into the AG model:

Trust versus control: positive connections

How do we create structures and processes that build trust in organizations?

Wright

The importance of systems that support the creation of trust was top of mind in our inquiries. With AG, we think designing organizations with the six design principles will enable systems of trust. A distinction came to be articulated in various conversations between governing based on trust and positive connections vs. governing based on control.

When people have the opportunity to interact over time, they are likely to develop a cooperative over a competitive system.
Gordon Whitaker

Two interviewees pointed to the nature of contracts and agreements within and between organizations: Safety leads to trust. My colleague Thomas Beckett says that 'we've created legal contracts as a way to replace trust'. This brings up how we address conflict – conflict is very intimate. Fear of conflict is also fear of connection. We have to develop competency in connecting, openness and open-heartedness. You can't legislate trust – it has to be built.

McCarthy and Nelson

Self-aware individuals can fall apart in groups or teams. Our 'safety' brain is heightened a lot when groups come together. The Blueprint of the WE Collaboration document 'contracts' can calm this dynamic in a group. It helps build commonalities (especially when we are no longer co-located in companies) and have mutual understanding of purpose. It shifts perception from 'I' to 'we' without eliminating 'I'. You must hold both identities – individual and group identity. Creating a Collaboration Document fosters creation of the 'we'.

Trust and positive connection themes appeared in other interviews as well:

Baroni

There must be a transformation from control before trust (today's world) to trust before control.

Peij

Positive connections and in the end, hopefully, a model that goes beyond the pyramid of Maslow, when we enter the realm of 'unconditional sharing/giving' and to expect nothing in return. Back to the core under the assumption that when we are connected in a positive way, we will also have a good chance to find good governance.

Shepard

Requisite organization-based management systems support the design of trust-inducing organizations and drive out the normal paranoia-genic features of most organizations. Societal legal structures for ownership, boards and their governance practices and labor law including the employment contract provide the guidelines so that requisitely designed structures, roles, clear accountabilities and authorities can be defined among the roles. Major focus on equalizing values and establishing shared context and dialogue to complete the work within that context all support high trust levels.

Robertson

We were looking for ways to harness the best of us human beings – of our capacity and potential – without just diluting to the least common denominator or getting stuck in the tyranny of consensus.

Getting hierarchy 'right' and leadership concerns

When we talk about new or more democratic models of governance, almost immediately we begin thinking about how leadership will be defined, what might happen to hierarchy. Will the organization be flattened? How will we make decisions? Who will have power? It is interesting to take a step back and not assume anything. Our interviewees are considering these questions as well:

We were looking for ways to harness the best of us human beings without just diluting to the least common denominator or getting stuck in the tyranny of consensus.
Brian Robertson

McCarthy and Nelson

Hierarchy still exists but shared knowledge is so widely available that it is shifting how hierarchy works.

Williams

Our work is not values-neutral. We guide our clients to discern the values by which they and their leadership teams will lead their organizations. We took ourselves through the same rigorous process of discernment to achieve clarity about our beliefs as a company.

Brown

We need at the systemic level for leaders coming into organizations and communities to re-conceive roles and responsibilities as being both skilled in designing an architecture of engagement around whatever the issue is, and bringing together diverse voices in the system to shed light and co-evolve intelligent responses, and having the skills to assure convening and hosting so that key conversations get seeded with powerful questions that are possibility-focused rather than problem-focused.

Block

What I have discovered is that governance is one aspect of organizational structure. A board is there to protect the common good while management gives order to the institution. It is rare for people 'at the top' to be connected to people at the 'lower levels' in today's organizations. The people at the top are chosen by deficiency-minded people to secure the organization from mistakes. It seems to me that the 'appreciative way' is an entirely different way to relate ... the most innovative individuals are middle range folks who have given up their ambition and decided to make as many changes as possible at their level. They were not longing to have a job at the 'top'.

Buck

Must talk about the fundamentals of power; authority is the clothing power puts on. A model of governance has to know how to handle high voltage power.

Shepard

Requisite organization (RO) has a research-based procedure for identifying the level of work complexity for the organization and the minimum required levels of management and work. Well-selected, trained and guided managers lead teams where dialogue and complementary strengths find synergy. RO is often stereotyped as the old dysfunctional hierarchy, but appropriately applied, it is a radically modern, ultra-light and effective way to design and manage organizations to achieve many of the values espoused by Appreciative Inquiry.

Organizational Readiness

How open are organizations to consider new ways of organizing? Some of the interviewees expressed surprise at how much acceptance there already is to trying more open, whole-system dialogic forms among their client groups. But really shifting the organizational design? There are concerns:

You need to synthesize with more of an engineering approach and with spirit – we have to connect our systems to something greater. What's greater than the group? What focuses us outside ourselves? John Buck

Peij

Connecting AI and the traditional governance may hold some big promises for the future. I do also believe that your target audience may not be quite ready for your ideas, but there, on the other hand, is certainly a group of early adapters that will find your ideas appealing. Continue to discover, don't draw conclusions too quickly. Don't freeze your models, ideas yet.

Shepard

There is a need to align AG so that it works effectively with common board and management structures ... which, in my opinion, are likely to expel AI from its traditional culture as soon as the sponsoring manager and consultant are gone.

Where to from here?

We look forward to continuing these conversations and sharing them with the community. If you would like to be involved, join the discussion in the [LinkedIn](#) dialogue. Let us know who you would like to talk to and who you think would add depth to our inquiry about emerging models of governance to illuminate the possibilities of Appreciative Governance.



There is a Phase Two to our work on AG, and to more conversations radiating out into the vast global experiment on how humans can more successfully organize ourselves together. From here, there are so many directions to pursue. Join us!

References

1. Models of governance specialists

Sociocracy / Dynamic Governance

John Buck

Governance Alive

Author of *We the People*

www.governancealive.com

Holacracy

Brian Robertson

HolacracyOne

www.holacracy.org

Wise Democracy

Jim Rough

Center for Wise Democracy

www.wisedemocracy.org

Requisite Organization

Ken Shepard

Founding President of the Global Organization Design Society, which focuses on the application of Requisite Organization

www.globalro.org

2. Conversation / dialogue design: process technology experts

World Café

Juanita Brown

Founder of The World Café

Author of the World Café: Shaping our Futures through Conversations that Matter

www.theworldcafe.com

Blueprint of WE Collaboration

(aka 'State of Grace') Documents

Maureen McCarthy and Zelle Nelson

The Center for Collaborative Awareness

www.blueprintofwe.com

Genuine Contact Program

Birgitt Williams

Dalar International

www.dalarinternational.com

3. Theory of governance contributors

Franca Baroni

Author of *On Governance* Cor Publicum: The Evolution of Res Publica,

www.corpublicum.us

Peter Block

Flawless Consulting

Author of *The Abundant Community*

www.peterblock.com

Stefan C. Peij

President, Governance University, The Netherlands,

www.governanceuniversity.com

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

School of Government faculty:

Lydian Altman

Director of Strategic Public Leadership Initiative

Margaret Henderson

Director, Public Intersection Project;

Gordon Whitaker

Professor of Public Administration and Government.

www.sog.unc.edu

Integrative Law Systems

Kim Wright

Founder of Cutting Edge Law

Author of *Lawyers as Peacemakers: Practicing Holistic, Problem Solving Law*

www.cuttingedgelaw.com



Cheri Torres

A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders. With PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in Collaborative Learning, she has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles. ctorres@innovationpartners.com



Dan Saint

Dan helps clients lead positive change and growth. He has broad organizational and governance consulting experience serving clients including Chrysler, Intel, Boeing, GM, Navistar, and Lowes and The World Bank. He cofounded and led Deloitte's global ERM practice and has spoken and published internationally on governance, risk and compliance. Contact: dan.saint.phd@gmail.com



Sallie Lee

For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her own consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as a thinking partner, facilitator, and strategist for client groups. She has trained more than 1200 people in the foundations of Appreciative Inquiry around the world. Contact: sallielee@mac.com



Bernard J. Mohr

Bernard Mohr is cofounder of Innovation Partners International. As thinking partner, consultant and designer, he supports clients within healthcare, manufacturing, retail, pharmaceuticals, education and government in creating sustainable value through flexible and effective work organization, multi-stakeholder networks and shared governance. Contact: bjmohr@innovationpartners.com

Transitioning to Appreciative Governance An Invitation to Dialogue

ABSTRACT

This article explores the complex move from traditional organizational structures to AG. In this unique article, four members of the team engage in an 'essay in four voices', adapted from Madelyn Blair's work, *Essays in Two Voices*. A number of themes emerge as being important in the transition to AG.

An essay in four voice

In this edition of AI Practitioner, we are introducing the concept and principles of Appreciative Governance (AG). As we have researched and written over the past year together, we have also contemplated what the key considerations would be for an organization transitioning from a system currently guided by traditional assumptions of governance to one guided by the principles of Appreciative Governance. We want to open a conversation about transitioning with the wider world of our readers – starting with our own conversation here.

To explore this transition and have a container for that conversation, we employed a dialogic writing technique called 'essay in two voices' which is designed as 'a place to move past agreement and discover shared understanding' (Blair, 2011). The format comes from Madelyn Blair's *Essays in Two Voices*.

The structure begins with a question, clearly understood by the writers even if they interpret it differently, who then write in stages starting with 500 words, and ending with 140 characters. Thus the sequence is:

- Each partner writes 500 words on the question.
- Each writes 250 words in response to their partner's 500 words.

This process continues for up to 4 more iterations moving from 250 words to 125 words, 60 words, 30 words and finally 140 characters (a tweet!). The value of this approach is that it is easy to understand and accomplish. It allows for individual expression without concern for judgment. It creates a comfortable space in which two people can converse on a question in a manner that encourages focus and as the process continues, concision.

Transition does not come about simply by changing structures and processes.
Cheri Torres

Our question is:

How would an organization transition to Appreciative Governance?

Our dialogue was in four voices. The process unfolded over several weeks. We each began with our own voice, our own style, our own thoughts and perspectives. In the first round, we each wrote a stand-alone approximately 500-word essay on transitioning to AG. We then shared our writing with each other and moved on to successive rounds. To download the full text of the dialogues, [follow this link](#). This article picks up the writing at 125 words, the third stage:

125 words

<p>Dan Saint</p> <p>Transitioning to AG from a traditional perspective on corporate governance is a special circumstance of organizational change. Successful change involves an entire human system transitioning from one familiar state to a new unfamiliar state and not returning.</p> <p>It usually begins with a person or a few people who are dissatisfied with the status quo and who perceive a potential new direction. Ideally, it involves a collective desire and hope for a new way of acting and being from all members. Organizational change can be envisioned by engaging all members of the system in a three-phase inquiry of appreciation, visualization and actualization. From what currently exists, what possible desirable future can we imagine and then how can we achieve that desired future?</p>	<p>Sallie Lee</p> <p>Given the principles we are espousing, along with the AG definition, what is fundamentally different so that we (or others) know where to start and what to look for in terms of change? Do we have any specific recommendations for easy ways and easy wins to get the principles working in an organization?</p> <p>We have talked about key capacities for organizations to develop, part of the META process Cheri and I have worked on. Do we have any recommendations on what you do first regarding those capacities? And yes, we have to change ourselves in order to lead organizational change. What do we recommend about that? What might that look like in terms of process and practices?</p> <p>To get started with AG, we need a few portals or doorways that provide an easy entry. There have to be some pathways into the new.</p>
<p>Cheri Torres</p> <p>AG requires personal change and the willingness to be uncomfortable. It is not enough for leaders to be aware, committed and willing; they have to learn and practice new ways of seeing, thinking and doing in order to model AG. The challenge for senior management is a perceived loss of control. Most people require coaching or the commitment of a high functioning community of practice which has been trained.</p> <p>Designing new structures and processes needs people prepared to engage in new ways. A transition to new ways of doing does not come about simply by changing structures and processes. People need to know why and how to work within that new design. Our experience is that most organizational members are anxious for ways to more fully engage in their work in meaningful ways.</p>	<p>Bernard Mohr</p> <p>What happens in the Boardroom matters, a lot... But so do thousands of 'points of governance' that happen in every corner of the organization at every level. Why is this?</p> <p>One of the core AG principles is the 'free will principle'. People choose the nature and extent of their action. Even with a 9 percent unemployment rate, initiative, commitment, capability and control do not come automatically with a paycheck. The good news is, they can be 'hard-wired' into our organizations. We know that when we design our work systems to make full engagement and accountability a successful and rewarding choice, people are much more likely to choose actions which are legal, ethical and positive to the long-term interests of shareholders and stakeholders.</p>

How do we organize flourishing? With a belief in structures and processes that allow us to practice our best. Sallie Lee

60 words

<p>Dan Saint In thinking through a course of transition, the principles of AG provide insight for the journey. The principles are strengths, free choice, wholeness, learning, emergence and uncertainty. To explore how they can be woven into the transition design, consider the strengths principle. As in any organizational change, an inquiry into the current state is a logical point from which to launch. What does the organization do well and what is its purpose? How does the organization create value and for whom is that value created? These are a few questions that can guide the journey towards then visualizing and then actualizing a desired future.</p>	<p>Sallie Lee Let us reexamine the AG 'what' to make sure we are clear on our distinctions, how we are using our terms. Do we agree on what terms like 'democracy' mean?</p> <p>If we are taking a 'design' rather than a 'solutions' perspective (per a discussion with Bernard) for transitioning to AG, what distinctions does our design process contain?</p>
<p>Cheri Torres Five key factors in redesigning the way you do business: 1. Principles: articulated 2. Assumptions: AI principles and social constructionism 3. Basic Beliefs: human beings are inherently good and seek meaningful connection and contribution 4. Assertions: living systems is the next best metaphysic—both self-organizing and intentional, relevant levels of hierarchy are essential 5. Cultural values: conscious, intentional alignment</p>	<p>Bernard Mohr When transitioning to AG, start with learning about it (via reading, benchmarking and workshops), then comes a decision at the top, followed by shared visualization of the desired end state. Finally, a transition strategy clarifying why, where, who, how (where and how can be based on the Governance Design Cube), making sure you have a Plan/Do/Check/Act (or some other learning cycle or prototyping mechanism) in place so modification and improvement will come easily.</p>

30 words

<p>Dan Saint Reflecting on our process and outcomes of our dialogue into transitioning to a governance system based on AG, it is interesting how we have woven our thinking along similar lines and yet arrived at very different language.</p>	<p>Sallie Lee Governance by compassionate, appreciative structures and processes begins with seeing the potential of it. Then we take compassionate, rigorous steps in that direction. Where do we begin the redesign? We shift our focus.</p>
<p>Cheri Torres 1. Experience the need 2. Learn: read, train – see with new eyes, think differently 3. Commit to practice – do differently 4. Engage the whole 5. Track and fan positive change</p>	<p>Bernard Mohr AG is shared, distributed governance, aligning people's strengths to make their weaknesses irrelevant, enabled by minimum structures (for guidance / alignment) with maximum autonomy (for execution by each team's own inspired authority)</p>

144 characters

<p>Dan Saint After considering what we now know about the relational nature of humans, AG is a logical imperative.</p>	<p>Sallie Lee How do we organize flourishing? With a belief in structures and processes that allow us to practice our best.</p>
<p>Cheri Torres Design for opportunity, enliven and engage everyone, reflect and learn, generate possibility, rapidly respond, flourish!</p>	<p>Bernard Mohr Old governance thinking cannot sustain new behaviors. Can governance innovation be imagined and translated into forms of control that enable flourishing?</p>

What themes seemed to emerge?

Despite our different voices and perspectives, several themes emerged in our collective writing. As a way to summarize these essays, we offer the following themes as relevant for a transition to AG:

- Inquire into organizational readiness
- Support shifts in mindset
- Encourage board and senior leadership support
- Sustain fierce commitment
- Learn from action
- Keep It Simple – practical methodology or process

Inquire into organizational readiness

It seems that a decision to even explore another form of governance requires 'pain' and/or 'passion for innovation' in the current system. Conditions within or without the organization must be such that the board and/or senior leadership begin to call for a new way of doing things because the old way is no longer producing the desired outcomes.

Cheri Torres

In discussions with senior leaders, you can get a sense of whether this transition would support them by asking a series of questions:

- Are you feeling overwhelmed at the level of complexity required in decision making?
- Are you frustrated with a lack of engagement and accountability across your organization?
- Are you in need of innovative solutions but experience a lack of creativity in the organization?
- Are you having to do more and more with less and less?
- Are you struggling with change management?
- Is there resistance to changes that would have a positive impact on the organization?

How do we organize flourishing: With a belief in structures and processes that allow us to practice our best. Sallie Lee

- Do you need processes that help the organization learn in an on-going way?
- Do you want cross-functional collaboration but can't bridge the silo-structures?

The greater the number of 'yes' answers you receive, the more ready these leaders are for a transition to AG.

Bernard Mohr

Appreciative Governance builds on the success of such approaches as Dynamic Governance (John Buck), Shared Governance in Healthcare (Timothy Porter-Ogrady), or Shared Governance in Post Secondary Institutions (Gary Olsen). AG goes further in concept, while practice has yet to fully catch up.

Given the lack of easily accessible full-blown implementations of AG, it is most suited at this time for leaders who have the will to shape it to their own unique circumstances.

Support shifts in mindset

To a person, we all felt that a transition to AG requires a significant paradigm shift. The basic underlying assumptions about the way the world is and the nature of being human are strikingly different for AG than for traditional top down governance. Here are the insights we offered:

Sallie Lee

The over-arching activity in beginning a transition to AG is for the leadership of an organization [and that has to include the Board] to agree that they fundamentally want to operate from a different philosophy of governance... It takes radically shifting the way we think of governance, connection... engagement, communication, decision-making and control.

Bernard Mohr

Old governance thinking cannot create new governance systems. And old governance systems cannot sustain new behaviors. Our collective challenge might be summarized as 'Can governance innovation be imagined and translated into forms of control that enable flourishing?'

Encourage board and senior leadership support

Transition of governance, being a shift that impacts the whole organization and primary decision makers, by necessity requires the leadership to initiate, be on board and model the transition. Without this, AG is not possible.

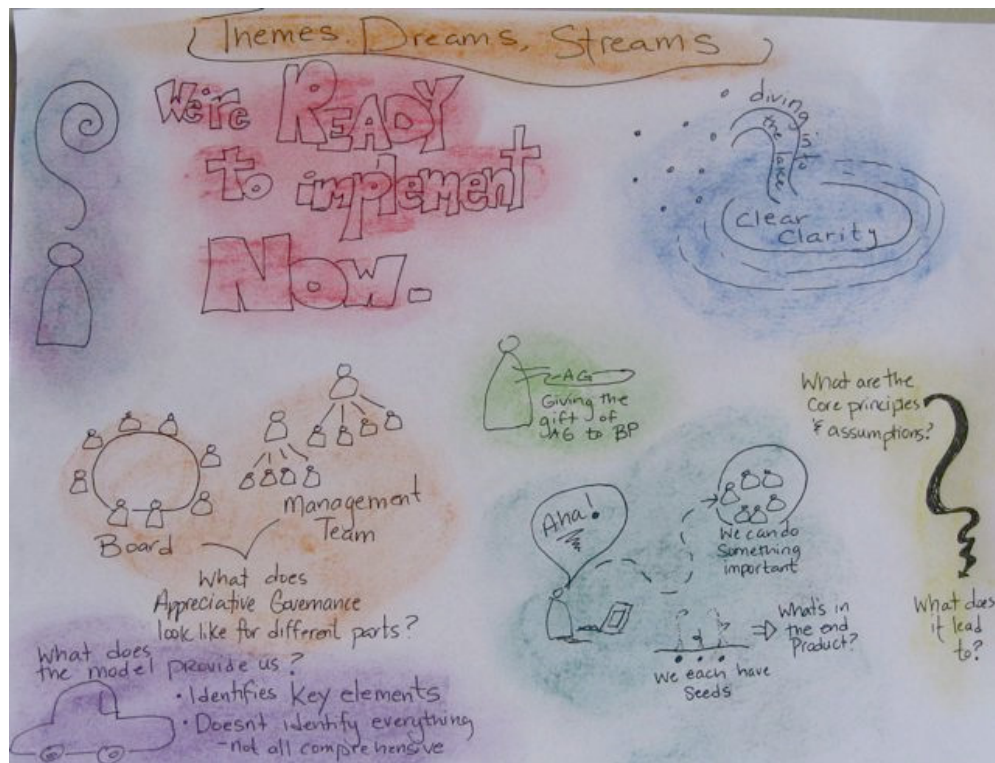
Dan Saint

This story relates to the ideas raised that changes in governance must start or be supported by those leading the company – and that this is possible!

Cheri Torres

Transitioning to Appreciative Governance begins at the top; this is not a decision that can be made at a grass roots level because it is about the whole system. So that's where the conversation needs to occur.

The mind map: We're ready to implement now.



Sustain fierce commitment

The transition to a new form of governance is a long-term commitment. We all agreed that a true commitment to the new vision is essential in order to support the extensive changes that will come about in the structures and processes within the organization, in the way the work is done and the way relationships evolve.

Sallie Lee

A transition to AG will require sufficient commitment to see the organization through the significant allocation of time, resources and stewardship to rethink how they organize themselves and redesign structures and processes.

Learn from action

Transition, of course, requires action on the part of leadership and members of the organization. Though we are not offering specific, step-by-step actions that will lead to AG, we did have ideas about actions that would help.

Cheri Torres

An Appreciative Inquiry into current best practices within the organization (and its ecosystem) for each of the design principles will support continuity as the organization moves toward a new governance model. Such an inquiry will surface successful strategies for designing structures and processes for achieving the principles. It will also provide insight and experiential understanding of how these principles will impact relationships, engagement, decision-making and work.

Old governance thinking cannot sustain new behaviors. Can governance innovation be imagined and translated into forms of control that enable flourishing?
Bernard Mohr

Keep It Simple – practical methodologies or processes

Finally, we offer insights about what is needed in order to transition to AG and make it feasible for people to begin to take steps towards such a complex transformation. We are aware that we are advocating lofty changes with few, if any, practical recommendations for moving forward.

Sallie Lee

We need a process that has more teeth than 'have leadership support, pick a few things, work on them and build capacity'. As I'm learning from a client that I have been working with for eighteen months, they want more of a template for working on appreciative capacities and for redesigning their organization. While I completely believe in the 'homegrown' principle that we use in working on the 5-D Design phase, I am coming to believe that we ourselves need more expertise in design and what it takes.

How can we help with key processes and procedures that lay groundwork and take steps to build confidence and a learning cycle to carry them forward?

To get started with AG, we need a few portals or doorways that provide easy entry. There have to be some pathways into the new.

Cheri Torres

It is (almost) all about design: systematic and intentional design of organizational structures and processes using the design principles as a guide. This means a significant review of social and technical systems within the organization and a willingness to intentionally design for shared governance and leadership at every level of the organization. It is also about capacity: in addition to redesigning structures and processes, it is important to broaden and build individual and team capacity for authentic relationship, collaboration, genuine dialogue, the art of inquiry and decision-making.

Bernard Mohr

A practical design process and relevant tools can be used to answer the following questions:

- What does the 'there' that we most want look like?
- Why would we want to get to 'there', what would we gain? And why not just stay as we are?
- What is the 'plan' for moving from 'here' to 'there'?

Our frameworks, tools and processes for engaging people in a process of strengths-based participative (re)design must lead to governance processes that enable members to set direction or purpose; to make decisions assuring the fulfillment of their purpose; and to set the standards of relationship, behavior and accountability now becoming available.

Reflecting on the process

**That Being Said ...**

We knew at the outset that we were just starting this conversation. We would like to invite you, the reader, into the dialogue online at [LinkedIn](#). Join us to move this dialogue forward: to share your experiences; help delineate methodologies and processes for ripening organizational conditions; for shifting paradigms and mindsets; for introducing and engaging boards and senior leaders; for practical actions and ways to move forward that offer easy entry points and easy wins.

The three articles following this one offer insight into capacities, challenges and opportunities that we believe will show up and are important in transitioning to Appreciative Governance.

Reflection on our process

The production of this article reflects the principles of AG in practice. There are clear parallels in transitioning to AG and how we set about to write this article about transitioning to AG. We began with a perspective that each of us had something to contribute and each voice was important. We wanted to encourage and provide an opportunity for each voice to be heard and respected. Hopefully, our process provided a forum for each to contribute something valuable. Our governance system was maximally democratic. For our purpose of beginning a conversation, the essay in two voices format seems quite appropriate.

Ideally, as when any group of people form for some purpose, each person gains something from the shared contribution of others and each person gives up some degree of independence. Our journey reflects a dialogue as to how to proceed with developing our ideas on transitioning and then a choice of writing the piece while in a dialogue.

These choices also reflect the principles of wholeness and emergence with an invitation into the conversation to the readers of the article. Rather than presenting a definitive methodology, we have shared our thoughts, allowing the readers to consider factors in transitioning and to further explore their own ideas in transitioning to a system of governance based on appreciative principles and design.

References

Blair, Madlyn. (2011) *Essays in Two Voices*. Maryland, USA: Pelerei

**Joan Colleran Hoxsey**

has over 35 years of experience working with a wide variety of organizations including governmental departments, businesses and private social service agencies. Dr. Hoxsey is currently the president of Relationship Resources LLC and serves organizations primarily in the tri-state area of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky and beyond.

Contact: relationshipresources@fuse.net

**Bob Laliberte**

a partner at Innovation Partners International has worked in, or consulted to, manufacturing, healthcare, banking and government organizations, leading organization design and start-up for high-performing enterprises. Using his engineering and OD background, he finds diverse strengths in people and appreciatively leverages collaboration to produce superior results.

Contact: bob@innovationpartners.com



Sustaining the Effort Towards Appreciative Governance

ABSTRACT

This article offers insight into the challenges the transition to AG is likely to raise, including the leadership and whole system commitment needed to continue to move forward. It offers specific practices and suggestions to support this effort.

Moving toward AG means changes will be needed at every level and in every person in the organization. People tend to hang on to the familiar even if it is not working. It is not surprising when you begin to change structures, policies and procedures, the road to change is a little bumpy even when valuing what works. No matter how good all the AG 'stuff' sounds, the needed changes at the personal level will be hard.

In the next few pages, we will focus on three areas we feel will be helpful in sustaining the effort toward AG. These areas are utilizing a 'see-feel-change' process for taking action, leading with passion and some simple ideas for enacting the AG Principles.

Taking action: utilizing a see-feel-change process

In their book *Switch*, Chip and Dan Heath talk about how we have thought about change in the past. Most of us believe that we have to observe a situation, look for the flaws, analyze what has to be done to decrease or solve them, create a plan to do that and voilà, change will happen. The brothers tell us that this model for change is ineffective – people do not change by simply thinking about things, including their deficits, or their organization's deficits. How many people, for instance, begin a New Year thinking about their weight and how much of it they need to lose? There have to be millions who analyze their situation, know the facts and do nothing to change. Most people do not like change because of an emotional attachment to something in the here and now (even if it is something nasty – 'the devil you know is better than one you don't'). And yet people do change – how does that happen?

The Heaths use a different model to explain how change does happen. They describe a see, feel, change model. People need to see the situation and have a sensory experience of it that invokes an emotional (feel) response in them before they make a change.



Principles and passion = emotional fuel

The Heaths tell the story of the new marketing director for Target who wanted the organization to move into a more upscale fashion market to compete in a larger market where more high style fashion was evident, but she also wanted the organization to do so at a price advantage. This idea was a hard sell – it was not easy for the management to move out of their current mindset about what their niche was. Their predominant story had been one of competition with Kmart and Wal-Mart.¹ They had not developed a story of being a more upscale competitor.

Just stay a bit ahead of those two competitors and Target will do well, was the company story. The new marketer wanted fashions that were more colorful, a move which meant Target would move out of its jeans, bland T-shirts and work colors clothing. She did not try to get management to think about the move by analyzing the benefits, instead she began to bring Mac computers, M&Ms and other colorful materials to staff meetings. There was a sensory, emotional response to these items being seen and ultimately the merchandizing plan was approved.

What's the lesson of this story for those wanting to move to create AG? Help yourself and others see and experience the emotion and feeling of change. People need to see and be part of the process in areas that mean something to them in order to feel that the proposed change is going to happen. Only as this occurs will they begin to trust the process. They need to see and feel the change as early as possible.

Leading with passion

Passion, one of the most powerful emotions, moves change along. It gives us the ability to deal with challenges and failures and keeps us moving forward regardless of what may be happening at the moment. All great leaders experience many failures, yet their passion for what they believe does not flag.

Sam Keen's book *Fire in Belly* has an intriguing title. Being 'on fire' about something speaks to having a big purpose that is the beginning of a 'purpose story'. When John F. Kennedy boldly stated that the United States would put a man on the moon within six years, his clear vision started the successful space race for the US.

Leaders hold steadfastly and persist in communicating, leading and taking bold actions that eventually change the course of whatever work they lead. Visionaries have very clear purpose stories.

Some stories of passion and AG

Jim Barnes is managing partner of enVista, a supply chain management consulting company. Jim Barnes is nothing if not passionate. The way he greets you, the way he talks about enVista and the work they do, the way he looks to the future and what it holds both personally and professionally tells you, this is a man with 'fire in the belly'.

In a recent interview, Jim talked about his passion and co-creating the future with his associates and clients. 'In the end, it is really about love,' Jim says. 'You have to want to do good in the world, not just chase the bottom line ... Of course, the bottom line, profit, is important ... You have a lot of people depending on the

¹ All three had traditionally been department stores offering the lowest prices.

company to do that, but it is not the only thing we need to do. We are up by 15% this year and of course, I am proud of that but I'm equally pleased with all the things we do to make it easier to be successful.'

Every member of enVista has a copy of the company's goals, the division's goals and the employee's personal goals on their desk. You can't help catching Jim's excitement as he talks about alignment of these goals and what part they play in his idea 'of doing good'. Someone has to be 'on fire' to help the group 'catch fire.' Nevertheless, this is a team effort.

We asked Peter Block, a world-renowned organization development practitioner and author, for examples of leadership passion in the transition toward AG:

'AES is a power company headed by Dennis Bakke who totally believes in the idea of giftedness and appreciation in the company's power plants. He wrote a book called the *The Joy of Work* that details how he looks for every strength in the organization, especially at lower levels. Most power companies have what they call a sinking fund; this fund is intended to take care of emergency situations that might occur.

'In most power companies a high level financial officer and committee would be in charge of how these funds will be managed. In AES that fund is managed by a finance group of workers. In evaluating how well this group has done managing these funds they found that they did as well as professionals.'

Another example of leadership passion is the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) in South Africa. NDDB is the largest agriculture company in the world. Women manage the 8,000,000 cows in the system. No woman has more than three cows. Can you imagine how much one has to believe in distributive power in order to create such an organization?

In medicine we are beginning to see this notion that all involved (the whole system) are needed for successful outcomes. Dr. Paul Uhlig, a cardiothoracic surgeon in Wichita Kansas, is passionate about the value of collaborative medicine and has created a model in which the whole system is valued and the opinion of all is sought.²

We have talked about the value of using a see, feel, change approach and have highlighted leading with passion as essential to sustaining the effort toward Appreciative Governance. AG principles can be used to guide decision making and actions on an ongoing basis. Below are some thoughts about how these principles can help as your organization works to maintain the idea and the reality of AG.

Simple ideas for enacting the AG design principles: Wholeness

We are both whole and part of a greater whole at the same time – maximize connections, ensure transparency and integrate stakeholder perspectives

The old tradition of a company picnic is not so outdated. Offer as many opportunities as possible for people in the organization to come together in groups, especially 'assemblies of the whole'; that is, times for the whole or major

² See the website http://www.centralplainsheart.com/index_files/your_family.htm for further information on Dr. Uhlig's passionate belief in the value of collaborative medicine.

parts of the organization to be together. Microsoft, for years, has had Fathers' and Mothers' Day picnics at their complex and believes these celebrations go a long way toward incorporating families into the organization. At the other end of the spectrum are yearly summits where the Appreciative Inquiry process is used to create plans for the future, develop a sense that everyone is 'in the know,' and integrate stakeholder perspectives.

Keep in mind, always, the value of having the whole system involved. Remember Dr. Uhlig's idea that it is through involving the whole system that great outcomes are made possible.

In another healthcare example 'including the whole' has taken on new meaning. Susan Plewes, Director, Integrated Health System Design told us the story of her Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) in North Simcoe Muskoka, Ontario, Canada. Legislation in Ontario, called the Local Health Integration Act of 2006, paved the way for local voluntary boards to facilitate decision-making and provide funds leading to an integrated model of care focused on the patient. Their purpose is to find a way to integrate care services across a community with a focus on: better health, better care and better value. Under a visionary CEO, the region has dramatically improved safety, quality and cost measures.

The LHIN uses a community engagement strategy where they talk to the public about the good and the bad. Decisions are made through collaboration based on very public performance data, building an atmosphere of trust. When participants come together the LHIN calls it 'the family dinner table'. Their efforts are always to look at the data first, make it public, engage the stakeholders involved and collaborate; they then integrate, measure results again and finally celebrate. The LHIN is truly an example of how you can pull diverse stakeholders into common purpose for the good of the whole.

The strengths principle

People and teams working from strengths maximize productivity, engagement and creativity – identify, magnify and connect individual and organizational strengths

Jonathan Liebert says AspenPointe asks people, 'What are your strengths? What do you want to become? How can we help you get there?' Jonathan points out that a business that asks these questions and acts on the answers is itself a strength – a social asset. It is a therapy and a pathway of personal fulfillment.

Our culture lacks a language where strengths are concerned. Most of our knowledge about self comes through a deficit mindset and language. Helping people get in touch with individual strengths can create a strengths environment.

Rabbi Albert Friedlander tells the story of growing up in Nazi Germany (Armstrong, 2010). As a Jew, he was assaulted on all sides with anti-Semitic propaganda. He remembers that as a child he had been taught to 'love his neighbor as himself', and he had concentrated on the neighbor part. One night he had the realization that if he was to live out that injunction he had to live the second part, to love himself. He remembers lying in bed one night and listing his strengths. They would mean everything after the war when he began to work with survivors, teaching them about their strengths as a means of healing. His strengths-spotting served him well.

To truly engage everyone
– that's the untapped
potential in modern
organizations. Ray Stata

A story from the US Navy about their use of AI speaks to this issue of strengths-spotting. A young seaman tells how he was signaling the captain on and off the ship to the very best of his ability when he was called to a captain's mast. A captain's mast has a long tradition in the Navy as the way sailors receive discipline – it is usually not a good thing to be called to one – except in this case, where the young sailor was told what a good job he was doing and given a pass. His captain was strengths-spotting.

Organizational strengths can be highlighted in all kinds of ways including an organization like Axiom News. Axiom is a news service that highlights positive stories in organizations. Their focus is totally on helping organizations get their 'good news' out to the public. Being conscious of good news can not only help with public relations; it is enormously helpful in encouraging people within the organizations. We all do better when we think what we have to offer can be used in creating good news.

The personal choice principle

People choose the nature and extent of their action – make full engagement and accountability a successful and rewarding choice

The strengths principle automatically feeds into and is supported by the principle of free choice. Once people know their strengths they can choose to use them.

The learning principle

Generating, collecting and transferring new information and knowledge creates value for the organization – practice collaborative inquiry, develop transparent feedback systems and engage in cycles of action and reflection

Some years ago, Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline*, talked about the need for organizations to become 'learning organizations'. This was revolutionary: the prevailing idea had been that individuals had to have learned all they needed to know before they became a part of an organization. Senge's idea about the learning organization challenged the prevailing thought about learning: he said learning should be ongoing and organization wide.

Here's a thought from Ray Stata, CEO Analog Devices, Inc. (Senge, 1990):

'I believe our fundamental challenge is tapping the intellectual capacity of people at all levels, both as individuals and as groups. To truly engage everyone – that's the untapped potential in modern organizations as a learning organism.'

Stata goes on to say that 'It is so easy to just go from one problem to the next "from pillar to post" without ever seeing the larger pattern.'

Stata speaks to this AG principle of learning by pointing out the fallacy that some are 'doers' and others are 'thinkers'. All members of an organization are both and all are capable of learning and contributing.

Crafting a larger story than doers and thinkers is the responsibility of those who find themselves in leadership positions throughout the organization. There is a mythic quality about this type of leadership, where leaders see themselves as stewards of the vision, in this case, the vision to create an AG structure where all

are learners. In this structure the vision ceases to be a 'thing' or a possession of the leader and becomes something 'owned' by the whole organization.

The way to implement and maintain this principle is to provide many learning opportunities such as organizational gatherings, formal and informal. Summits, staff meetings, training days, office parties and even talk around the water cooler offer opportunities for learning.

The 'steward teacher' leader pays attention and rewards, by recognition, those behaviors that further the organizational vision. The captain in the Navy story was a steward teacher looking to further the vision of excellence.

He and others like him encourage the ongoing development of roles where both thinking and doing are essential. This provides fertile ground for learning, growth and continual redesign where people connect and understand how the organization works.

The emergence principle

Novelty arises in the context of simple interactions – spark the new, encourage curiosity, stay open and pay attention

At a large power plant in Ontario, Canada, a software product has been used to help encourage new ideas and gain support across the organization. Ideas suggested by anyone are shared with the whole organization. The technology allows anyone to add to or improve on the idea and show his or her support. A panel reviews the ideas and those with the most potential and support are carried forward by a team, including the person who first put forward the idea. The organization has found many novel innovations surfacing and being acted upon. In innovation, everyone's voice is important.

Using tools and approaches such as LEAN, Six Sigma and Structured Innovation can assist organization members to routinely seek novelty. To enhance these approaches, use a combined focus of problem-solving and success-solving to further boost the generation of ideas. Success solving refers to identifying the best that is happening in the organization and solving for the causes of success ... just like we solve for the causes of failure.

The uncertainty principle

The future is ambiguous and uncertain – improvise using diverse input and collective sense-making

We constantly have to shift our direction based on influences around us. Unexpected events and challenges occur routinely due to complexity in our daily lives and endeavors. This requires us to improvise in very short timeframes.

ThedaCare (see page 30) created Rapid Improvement Events in which a cross-sectional team comes together (including patients and community) for a week to work on a process needing improvement. In LHIN, divergent stakeholders of both providers of services and users of those services met regularly to provide better health, better care and better value for all in their region, and to respond rapidly using metrics to guide their work.



Improvising: playing classic New Orleans jazz: King Oliver's Creole Band

These forms of engagement provide the means for stakeholders and service users to innovate and adapt, and put in place initiatives to deal with uncertainty ... and of course measure and celebrate the results!

Going forward

Sustaining AG is like playing good jazz: it calls for trust that others will play their part at the appropriate time. Russell Lynes said 'Improvisation was the blood and bone of jazz, and in the classic, New Orleans jazz it was collective improvisation in which each performer, seemingly going his own melodic way, played in harmony, dissonance, or counterpoint with the improvisations of his colleagues. Quite unlike ragtime, which was written down in many cases by its composers and could be repeated note for note (if not expression for expression) by others, jazz was a performer's not a composer's art.'

To be a good jazz band Frank Barrett, suggests seven actions. We feel these apply as a metaphor for sustaining the effort toward AG. Our interpretation of Frank's 'improvisational actions' is:

1. Make a deliberate effort to understand how others play – what are the strengths of the members of the organization (band); how do they make sense of their work and life.
2. Know that many mistakes in interpretation will be made; be willing to start over – starting anything new is difficult. It is especially difficult to build new organizational structures; we are bound to make mistakes – deal kindly with yourself and others.
3. Create as little structure as possible and maximum flexibility – stay lean with structure so you can play the various instrument easily.
4. Distribute tasks and work toward synchronization – flatten the hierarchy.
5. Rely on retrospection; look back to make sense of what has happened – don't be afraid to rewrite, rethink, redo.
6. 'Hang out' together, understand the value of belonging to a community of practice – play together as often as possible.
7. Take turns soloing and supporting – no one conductor.

Lead with passion, live by the AG principles, encourage the jazz band, engage diverse, skilled and empowered organization members and stakeholders to see the situation, feel the impact of the moment and change ... with beauty and grace.

References

Armstrong, K. (2010) *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Axiom News 5-25-11

Bakke, Dennis (2005) *The Joy of Work – A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job*. PVG.

Barrett, Frank J. (2005). *Creativity and Improvisation in Jazz and Organizations: Implications for Organizational Learning*. <http://www.leadervalues.com/Content/detail.asp?ContentDetailID=961>

Heath, C. and D. Heath. (2010) *Switch: How to Change When Change is Hard*. Broadway Books

IDEO www.ideo.com

Lynes, Russell. *New Orleans Quotes*. <http://quotes.dictionary.com/search/new%20orleans>

Navy Video *Navy_Leadership_Summit_rm.cwru*

Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of a Learning Organization*. Currency-Doubleday.

Uhlig, P. Quote from website: Central Plains Cardiothoracic Surgery LLC. www.centralplainsheart.com

Special issue on Sales and Finance



Sales/Finance and Appreciative Inquiry: Positive Images, Positive Action, Positive Results

Guest editor: Ralph Weickel, principal of Performance Management



Here are some questions the issue will consider:

- What are the applications, breakthroughs and success stories using the practice of AI in sales/finance?
- What are examples of the potential of AI in the development of future financial systems and applications?
- Where is the potential for AI to be applied in the development of sales as a profession and industry?

This issue of AI Practitioner is being created for the 2012 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference in Ghent, Belgium. To make sure you receive your notification when it is ready, [register online](#) for the free AIP enews, go to facebook.com/aipractitioner or follow us on Twitter [@AIPractitioner](#)



Sallie Lee

For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her own consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as a thinking partner, facilitator, and strategist for client groups. She has trained more than 1200 people in the foundations of Appreciative Inquiry around the world.

Contact: sallielee@mac.com



Cheri Torres

A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders. With PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in Collaborative Learning, she has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles.

Contact: ctorres@innovationpartners.com



META – Developing Capacities for Living Appreciative Governance

ABSTRACT

Multiple ways of knowing, Engagement, Thinking together and Acting together form the building blocks of appreciative organizations and are fundamental for high performance, innovation and effective collaboration.

We are together. Every act is an act of co-creation. Every conversation shapes the world. Every interaction is creative practice.

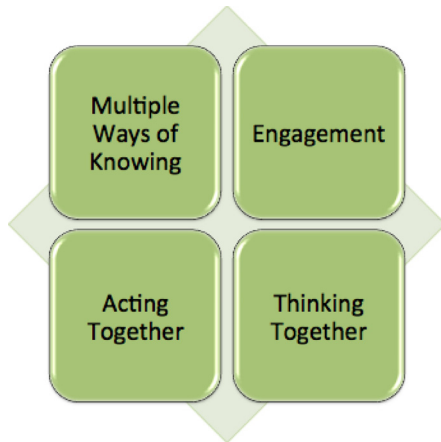
Appreciative Governance offers members of an organization a model for co-creating sustainable value from within a living systems paradigm. The design principles support the intentional design of life-giving structures and processes, which include developing the capacity to work together in positive, dynamic and generative ways. This is at once both simple and complex, for it requires us to practice ways of working together that may be natural, yet uncomfortable at first because they are not the way most organizations have encouraged us to focus our energies.

We suggest there are four fundamental capacities that form the building blocks of appreciative organizations, fundamental for high performance, innovation and effective collaboration – the META capacities. These building blocks support the foundation of strong, effective relationships and the fabric that connects the whole to organizational mission and vision. Our experience indicates that the greater an organization's capacity to practice META, the greater its chances to flourish, even in the face of exponential change.

We believe these capacities are inherent in each of us and, once tapped, can be enhanced through practice and professional development. The emphasis is on building connectors among people so that they are collectively more able to align and deliver on the organization's mission.

The META capacities

Developed over the past five years, META evolved as a result of working with organizations that wanted to become more collaborative, appreciative and innovative. Leaders wanted to find better ways to access collective intelligence, both internally and externally and to extend the highest performance potential



of their people. These capacities are likely to seem obvious, but applying them in the context of the Appreciative Governance (AG) design principles unleashes a whole new level of potential and intelligence for the organization.

META stands for:

Multiple Ways of Knowing - our ability to shift perspective, engage in reflective practice and to reframe.

Engagement - our ability to connect with one another, with our work and to create environments where we feel we belong.

Thinking Together - our ability to enter into exploratory dialogues that tap our collective wisdom and spur innovation.

Acting Together - our ability to act on what emerges from our best collective thinking in ways that reinforce mutuality, accountability and sustainability.

Below we provide a brief overview of each capacity coupled with a simple activity to help you experience the potential to impact our individual and organizational well-being.

M: Multiple ways of knowing – reframing everyday

How are we individually and collectively framing our experience, one another, 'we' the collective and the topics or areas we are working on?

Despite the fact that there are multiple ways of knowing and most of us can name many of them, we spend most of our time operating from a place of 'knowing from within' – acting and engaging with others and with situations from habituated patterns of thinking, including our own lenses, which we rarely acknowledge are in effect.

As it turns out, perception governs action. It is framed by:

- Completeness of information
- Recognition and interpretation
- Expectation and intention
- Worldview and mental maps

Our capacity to recognize that we, individually, only hold a portion of the whole picture and to challenge our ways of knowing, makes room for differing perspectives, new knowledge and challenging questions: it is the hostess at the doorway to new insights, emerging ideas and new possibilities. Our ways of knowing spin along the familiar axis of the constructionist-based principles of AI: the way we know is fateful; what we focus on expands, what we pay attention to becomes our truth and what we expect is what we see. We do this no matter what level of the system is active: as individuals, as groups and teams, as whole organizations. Building the capacity for multiple ways of knowing in an organization echoes one of the central tenets outlined in Thatchenkerry and Metzger's book *Appreciative Intelligence* (2006). They hypothesize that the ability to reframe is key to appreciative intelligence.

Simple Activity: M

Take one minute, click on [this link](#) and try the challenge.

Our frame influences what we see, what we experience and what we believe is possible.

The ability to frame and reframe can be strengthened with practice. The capacity expands with one's ability to:

- See oneself as well as the frame through which one sees and experiences the world
- Understand another person and to see the other's frame,
- Perceive an object or situation from different perspectives and within different contexts
- Inquire into possible new frames (Peters, 2005)

Multiple ways of knowing emerge and contribute when we engage in reflective practice, especially together: recognizing that we have a frame through which we see; understanding how our frame is influencing our seeing, thinking and acting; and inquiring into alternate frames in order to expand possibilities and knowledge.

We all have had the experience of trying to 'put ourselves in someone else's shoes' and similarly, have felt the sting when we feel that someone cannot or will not acknowledge our own perspective and way of seeing a situation. Many unnecessary court cases are engendered when individuals and organizations cannot find ways to see one another's perspective or find a way to mutually frame a situation so that they can find ways to move forward.

Organizationally, multiple ways of knowing shows up in structures and processes that notice, welcome and invite different perspectives and create ways for people to make meaning together.

Building organizational capacity to step back from our potentially limiting frame also allows us to perceive weak opportunity signals on the horizon as well as signs of human alignment and goodness at work in the system. Being able to view ourselves and others thorough a positive, compassionate, welcoming frame helps awaken our empathy and capacity to work together.

E: Engagement – connecting everyday

How are we engaging ourselves and one another in the potential of our organizations, communities and world? How do we create a sense of belonging for ourselves, one another and our organizations as accountable players on the community and world stage?

Engagement is the currency of culture and operates through welcome. Nothing happens without it. We can show up for work everyday and not be engaged in the work or the organization – we may find ourselves just going through the motions. That disengagement, or 'standing back with arms crossed' has deep consequences for the flourishing of the individual and organization.

Engagement feels like connection – like going online – suddenly we are connected to more resources and become willing to contribute our own. It is not just a nice, fuzzy feeling, but rather a fostered sense of mutual accountability for participation, ideas, dialogue, relationship and outcomes.

Simple Activity: E

Recall a time when you were deeply engaged with others on a project, when you were able to fully contribute your ideas, information and creativity. Take a minute to reflect on that time.

- What contributed to your engagement?
- What did you value about the others and how they related and participated?
- What was possible because of your engagement and that of the others?

When people feel connected and have a sense of belonging, they are able to bring their full selves into play – their strengths, their insights, their questions, their skills, their joys and their commitment. This is what most organizations want from their staffs and members.

What creates that feeling of connection and belonging over time? Two central components:

1. Alignment between the vision/mission/values of the organization and the strengths, passion, beliefs and values of each person;
2. The ability to safely play full out, to bring one's abilities, ideas and perspectives to the table with a sense of mutual respect and trust.

An organization's ability to think together effectively and tap its collective intelligence will only emerge when it is designed to facilitate connection and engagement, making room for every person to bring their best to the table. It turns out that one fundamental facet of engagement is feeling that our ideas and creativity are really welcome. We disengage when we feel that we are placed in boxes of limited job descriptions, unable to offer the range of our strengths, unable to weigh in with our observations and recommendations for solutions in our areas.

Engagement in any group endeavor becomes a continuous dance of welcome: inviting participation and contribution, with each person responsible for accepting that invitation.

A major obstacle in this process is fear. It is essential to make it safe so that everyone can accept invitations to participate, take risks and contribute; it is why building mutual respect and trust is essential. Neuroscientist David Rock's research (Rock and Tang, 2009) shows that a threat response is easily triggered in social situations, and threats lead us to minimize danger by disengaging. Most of us have experienced this, and all of us have witnessed it. A sarcastic comment, a dismissing look, a critical reply and we withdraw, shut down and learn it is not safe to play full out or even to raise new ideas. This contributes to limiting our engagement, participation and commitment.

Threat trumps reward in our brains because the threat response is immediate and hard to ignore. In addition, the research of positive psychologist Barbara Frederickson, tells us that negative emotions, such as fear, narrow our thought and action repertoire and decrease resiliency. In the face of fear, we can literally cease to have creative thoughts or access our knowledge and expertise. According to Fredrickson's research, we need to have a ratio of at least 3:1 positive to negative thoughts to flourish. The more we look for ways to genuinely acknowledge and affirm one another in our organizations, the more we connect, accept the invitation to engage and find our way to flourishing.

We can create a sense of safety in groups and for individuals by consciously choosing to act in ways that genuinely welcome, affirm and value others. We can create norms around listening, being open and encouraging affirmation, curiosity and generative questions that bring everyone into conversations. How we talk to one another everyday either invites engagement ... or withdrawal.

Simple Activity: T

Grab a piece of paper, take one minute (time yourself) to write down all the things you can do with a paperclip. Stop at the end of one minute.

Next time you are with a group of friends repeat this challenge as a group – with one person recording the ideas as people say them. Stop at the end of one minute.

Typically a group will generate many more ideas in the same amount of time and can keep going long after an individual runs out of ideas.

T: Thinking together – learning and innovating everyday

What are we exploring together? Are these the most powerful questions we can ask? Where are they taking us? What is emerging?

Everything happens in conversation. Whether these are productive or nonproductive depends on intention and preparation.

The Greeks were the first to suggest that an individual cannot be intelligent on his or her own. Developmental psychology tells us that our minds only develop in relationship to other minds.

Strategies for divergent – before convergent – thinking, inclusive conversations, idea exchange and storytelling enable us to co-create the future. They connect us to one another as well as uniting our knowledge and wisdom into collective potential. One of the best ways to elicit powerful conversations and to surface our most useful stories is through open, directed inquiry.

Thinking and learning together require a question we do not have the answer to, coupled with collective curiosity and the willingness to explore openly in search of new knowledge.

Dialogue is a key practice associated with thinking together. It is distinguished from debate and discussion by its open and invitational format. One of the most famous proponents of dialogue was MIT physicist David Bohm (1996):

'In dialogue, when one person says something, the other person does not in general respond with exactly the same meaning as that seen by the first person, rather, the meanings are only *similar* and not identical. Thus, when the second person replies, the first person sees a *difference* between what he meant to say and what the other person understood.

On considering this difference, he may then be able to see something new, which is relevant both to his own views and to those of the other person. And so it can go back and forth, with the continual emergence of a new content that is common to both participants ... Each has to be interested primarily in truth and coherence, so that he is ready to drop his old ideas and intentions and be ready to go on to something different, when this is called for.'

Emergence is fueled by dialogue – by deep exploration and inquiry together. Keeping the spirit of inquiry active is key; it is helpful to develop an attitude of curiosity. Learning together in dialogue requires that we suspend our need to have the answer and instead invite a provocative question. Otto Scharmer (2009) recommends dialogue with an open mind, open heart and open will in order to 'make room for the future that wants to emerge' from the group. Environments and inquiries that allow time and space for exploring each other's ideas and contributions, watching for what is emerging and harvesting the best of the collective wisdom are necessary everyday if organizations are going to flourish in a world of exponential change.

A: Acting together – aligned action everyday

How are we set up to coordinate ourselves to implement, experiment, improvise, adapt, reflect and learn? What comes out of our invitation to multiple ways of knowing, engagement and thinking together? How do we bring co-creative thinking into usable form that continues to evolve?

Simple Activity: A

Consider the implications of establishing a reward system that acknowledges the value of inquiry, shares stories about calculated risk, failure and ultimate success, acknowledges team success and searches for ways to add value for all stakeholders.



What are the most effective leverage points in an organization to support acting together? Join our dialogue LinkedIn dialogue and share your ideas!

Part of remaining engaged together over time rests in being able to turn our conversations into actions that resonate with the potential expressed in our exploratory dialogues and inquiries. Just having continued conversation without a sense of the ability or permission to move forward eventually drains our energy. Most of us have had that experience: a group comes up with great ideas, makes decisions on what emerges, then watches those ideas slip away because the structures and processes of the organization are not set up for easy, aligned implementation. Mostly, we run into walls, either from a lack of resources allotted, communication pathways among departments, or because someone higher up in a hierarchy is charged with making things happen and this is not one of their priorities.

Acting together effectively calls for a capacity built of clear alignments, roles and implementation processes. Often, our organizations are good at making this clear for individuals but not for collective acts in unison, how we contract with one another. Most often, our structures of remuneration, reward and review are designed to encourage individual excellence rather than clear coordination and group agility.

Acting together is the capacity to shift perception from 'I' to 'we' without eliminating the sense of 'I'. We must hold both identities – individual and collective – in our processes of co-design. We must also build in reflection time to assess how we are doing together, the greatest measure of which is what we are actually getting done together over time.

Bringing AG to life through META

The META capacities inform the practical implementation of the design principles for AG. When the design principles are in effect, people in the organization should, by design, begin to access these foundational capacities. By enhancing their capacity through appreciative practices and professional development, the organization will expand its potential to flourish.

Here are just a few of the many, many ways to bring the design principles to life by practicing META:

Multiple ways of knowing

- Reflect. Before acting: (a) What is the context? (b) How is my/our frame (and assumptions) influencing our thoughts? (c) What is being called for? (What are my/our requests?)
- Welcome ideas and diverse perspectives. Include the perspectives of all stakeholders and make meaning together by asking others for their ideas and being open to what they have to say.

Engagement

- Share decision making. Articulate clear lines of authority and responsibility with decision making at lowest level possible
- Live your values. Assess the cultural values of your workplace and work teams and intentionally design your structures, processes and training to align with cultural values that will support AG and sustainable value.

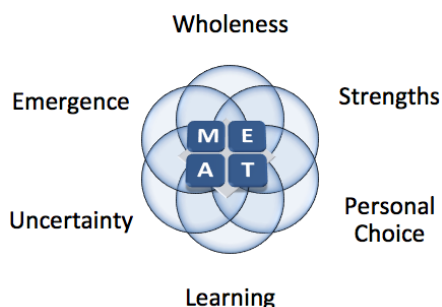


Figure 2: Incorporating META with the six AG design principles

When people experience feeling betrayed or unrecognized, they experience it as a neural impulse, like a blow to the head. David Rock

- Promote trust. Insist on behaviors that foster a culture of mutual respect and trust. Assume positive intent.

Thinking together

- Flip the problem. Develop the capacity to clearly articulate outcomes by reframing problems and issues.
- Develop tolerance for difficult conversations. Learn ways to sustain conversation even in the face of disagreement and different perspectives.

Acting together

- Support learning and reflection. Create structures and processes to specifically support learning and reflecting together.
- Measure. Delineate measureable outcomes, monitor action and celebrate success.

Developing META capacities requires conscious intention and reflection. They will also expand more rapidly as you intentionally redesign current governance and organizational design processes and structures.¹

References

Bohm, D. (1996) *On Dialogue*. NY: Routledge.

Fredrickson, B. (2009) *Positivity*. NY: Crown Publishers.

Adapted from Peters, J. (2005). 'Levelising: Multiple Ways of Knowing in Practice.' Paper presented at 12th Annual Conference on Post-Compulsory Education and Training, Gold Coast, Australia

Rock, D. and Y. Tang. (2009) 'The Neuroscience of Engagement,' *NeuroLeadership Journal*, Issue 2, 15-22.

Scharmer, O. (2009). *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Thatchenkerry, T. and C. Metzger. (2006) *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing a Mighty Oak in an Acorn*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

¹ Webinars on working with the META capacities will begin in early 2012. Contact Cheri and Sallie for more information.



Bernard J. Mohr

Bernard Mohr is cofounder of Innovation Partners International. As thinking partner, consultant and designer, he supports clients within healthcare, manufacturing, retail, pharmaceuticals, education and government in creating sustainable value through flexible and effective work organization, multi-stakeholder networks and shared governance. Contact: bjmohr@innovationpartners.com



Appreciative Governance by Design

A Practical and Flexible Framework

ABSTRACT

This article provides insight into the deep changes required in the culture of the workplace as part of the transition to AG. It describes a framework and process for achieving this cultural change through the intentional design of policies, practices, structures and processes that capitalize on individual and collective strengths and maximize the capacity of the whole.

In three prior articles¹ there has been lively discussion of how leaders and members of organizations might develop themselves and others as part of the move towards Appreciative Governance (AG). This focus on people development is key. But for new skills and behaviors to be supported and perhaps evolve in the daily workplace, deep change in the everyday world that people experience at work is the other side of the coin.

That is the work of governance design, the intentional design of policies, practices, structures and processes that capitalize on individual and collective strengths, and maximize the capacity of the whole.



The assumptions

Michaelangelo once said, 'I saw an angel in the stone and carved to set it free.'

¹ 'Transitioning to Appreciative Governance', 'Sustaining the Effort Towards Appreciative Governance' and 'META – Developing Capacities for Living Appreciative Governance'

Let me build on what Michelangelo said and share an idea with several moving parts, which may at times seem beyond reach, overwhelming or, depending on your life experience, an idea that just seems 'passé'. But let me take a go. This idea has three assumptions:

1. It is all there already. If we can see it, we can 'sculpt' it out.
2. When we see ourselves as 'sculptors', we will know where and how to start creating together.
3. As we sculpt together, we should not be surprised if we as sculptors, our relationships with each other and with the materials transform in the process.

Backdrop for the basic idea

$P \times MG = A$. In this equation, people (P) work with each other within a model of governance (MG) and that creates accomplishments (A). Never neutral, an organization's MG is a powerful determinant of what is possible for people to accomplish.

For example, on a recent trip I encountered a typical travel challenge. The only way for me to get to my destination was with airline B. But my ticket was with airline A – and a lot depended on me doing this without paying for another ticket. With my heart in my hand, I asked the agent for airline B if she might accept my ticket from airline A.

To my pleasant surprise, she turned to her co-worker and after a quick consultation said to me, 'Oh, don't worry, we are happy to do that. Under the new rules that our colleagues developed, if any two of us think that it makes sense for our company to accept our competitor's ticket without charging the customer, we have the authority to do it, I see that you are one of our preferred flyers so we would be happy to make this switch for you without any change fee.' And there I was, with a new ticket, on my way to my destination and without even having to pay a change fee! I was a customer committed to airline B as a result of their new governance model – perhaps one someone had seen within the stone and carved out?

Dynamic, resilient architecture

I wondered, 'How do I make sense of this?' I let my mind wander. After some forty years as a practitioner/observer, I realized I had learned a few things. First, almost every person I have ever worked with has some desire to experience dignity, meaning, freedom and a sense of community at work. Second, those people had a lot more to contribute than they actually were – not unlimited contribution potential, but more than they were providing. Third, when asked, people at all levels of an organization have been very capable of creating, with relatively little support, a more dynamic, resilient, accountable and strengths-enabling organizational architecture within which to get work done. And last, but definitely not least, it has been my observation over and over that the people involved in governance redesign activities not only transformed their work environment and their outputs – but perhaps as significantly, began to transform their own sense of who they were and what they could become and contribute.

So why do we put up with governance models (i.e. organizational designs) that hinder, frustrate and generally inhibit full engagement, creativity and excellence?

Again, drawing on the last few decades of work with a wide variety of clients across the world, I have some hypotheses:

1. Many people have had no other experience and so imagine that the way their organization is designed, is the only way it *can* be designed. Even worse, people have experienced 'faux' redesigns, shifts in the boxes on the organization chart with no real change for the majority in the access to power, resources or opportunity.
2. We live in a 'psychologized' world. Who hasn't at some time had their MBTI, or DISC or VIA or (insert your own instrument) 'done' to find out more about themselves as individuals. This can lead to powerful insight and growth. However, we may have come to over-focus on individual (or even team) capability in understanding what creates success.

We have made little room for understanding what impact the design of the social architecture of work, (i.e. the information people have access to, authorities they are granted, freedoms to self-organize, accountabilities, growth opportunities they have at work, access to fair pay and justice, etc.) has on our individual and collective capacity for accomplishment. This is an important both/and.

3. We imagine that the differences of opinion, the vested interests, and even the limited perspectives that any one of us individually has, would make any collaborative redesign process impossible or at best, minimally innovative.

Overwhelming obstacles? I don't think so. I want to suggest that with a positive, strengths-based governance design process; a different conception of what governance design is about; and a practical framework that lets people focus on the things that matter, we can stack the deck in our favor to overcome our three challenges and bring the promise of AG to life.

Digging deeper: A positive, strengths-based governance design process

My guess is that most readers of this particular journal already have considerable experience with positive, high participation strengths-based innovation processes, so I won't dwell on them here. But I do want to remind us that when we assume an organization needs affirmation rather than fixing; when we assume that most people want to experience dignity, meaning, freedom and a sense of community at work; and when we assume that those who do the work know how to redesign the system of governance within which they work, then we are well on our way to enacting the three parts of 'the basic idea'.

1. It's all there.
2. We are sculptors creating together.
3. Both sculptor and material transform in the process.

A different conception of what governance design is about

Traditionally, governance design has been focused on high-level decision-making and control systems for purposes of compliance and control. Designing these governance architectures has been almost exclusively the purview of accountants, lawyers and economists responding to negative situations. Alternatively, consider an invitation to join in a widely participative process of intentionally bringing into being desired behaviors rather than controlling for compliance. A process of co-innovation in the nature of work (i.e. where 'it' is

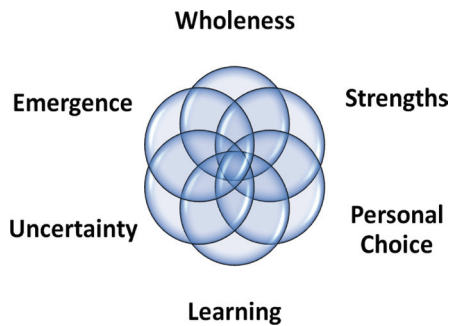


Figure 1: The six design principles of AG

done, when it is done, with whom it is done, how it is done), and the practices, policies and structures which enable it.

Imagine the possibility that positive governance design might be much more than deciding the size of the board, or how much authority to give the CEO, although that may be included!

Imagine that together we might generate a life-giving social architecture, one that allows everyone in the organization to play to their strengths in ways that are fully acceptable legally and socially.

A practical framework that lets you focus on the things that matter

Governance design is serious work with a lot at stake. It should be fun, but it will also be intensive work. To get started we need to answer a few key questions.

What does our governance model have to do for us? (We should probably know this before we start to design.)²

Any governance system or model must make it as easy as possible for the organization to effectively perform the four functions every organization requires if it is to flourish and prosper. We call these the four AGIL functions – i.e. to:

- Adapt rapidly respond to disturbances, fluctuations and unexpected opportunities in the organization's internal or external environment
- Attain a set of Goals
- Integrate and coordinate effort, resolving conflict
- Develop their capacity for Long-term Sustainability
- What will guide us as we together generate alternative governance policies, structures and processes?

Samuels, Torres et al, in their article on 'Organizational Design Principles for Appreciative Governance'³ provide us with the six guiding principles:

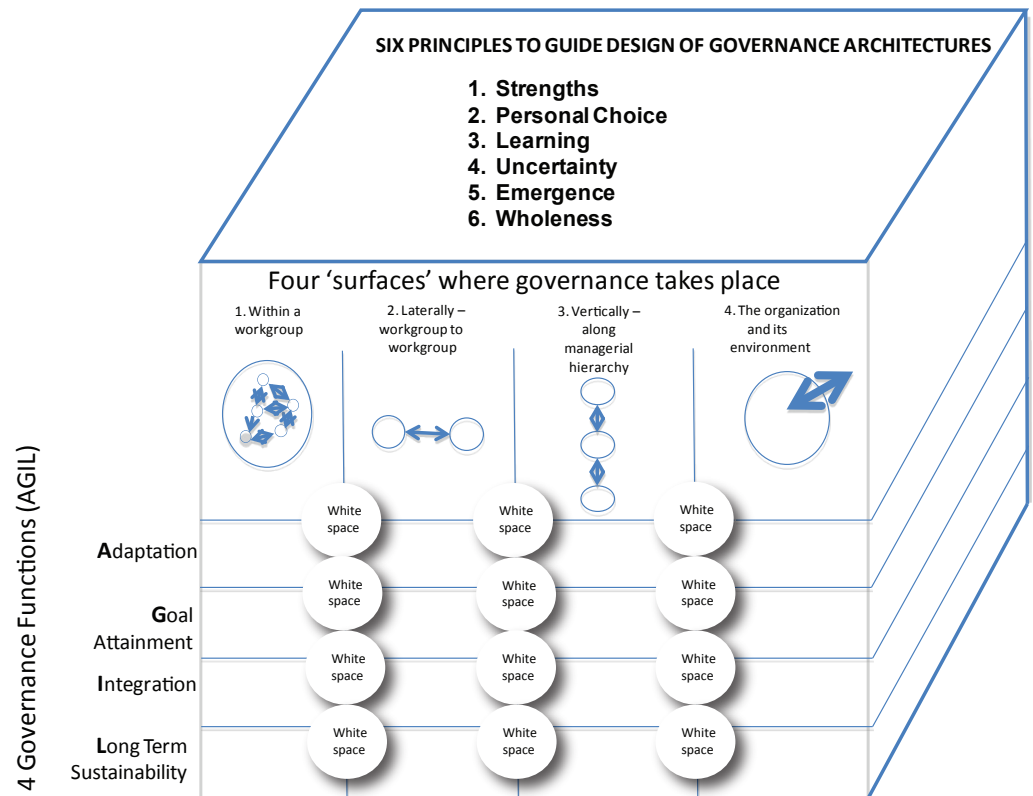
- Strengths
- Personal choice
- Learning
- Uncertainty
- Emergence
- Wholeness

These principles not only provide insight and guidelines for boards and management that choose to undertake this sort of transformation, they also

² For more on the essential functions of a governance system and the AGIL model, please see page 18 in the article 'What is Appreciative Governance?'

³ For more on the six principles of AG, see page 23.

Figure 2: The AG design cube
(adapted from work by John J. Cotter
and William O. Lytle)



provide practical criteria against which the 'designers' (i.e. people within the organization) can calibrate their choices.

When a governance architecture is designed to incorporate these six principles, I believe the result will be:

- Expanded capacity to access all the strengths, resources, assets and capacities of the organization and its environment
- Greater support for productive action in support of the four AGIL functions

The Appreciative Governance Design Cube

In our 'Appreciative Governance Design Cube' you see four 'surfaces' (relationship locations) where the four AGIL functions need to be performed if the organization is to flourish and prosper. The four AGIL functions are listed down the left side. This makes sixteen cells or relationship locations where you could start to redesign your MG – not counting the white spaces in between.

Where do we start?

The suggestion is 'start on two ends of the spectrum' outside-in and inside-out at the same time. This would mean starting with redesign of policies, structures and processes within work groups *and* redesign of structures and processes that effect the transactions between the organization and its external relations.

On the left of this image we have the four important AGIL activities or functions that every organization must perform if it is to flourish. Along the front face of

the cube, we have four surfaces (relationship locations) where the four functions need to be performed.

For example, people within work groups are, on a daily basis, adapting to unforeseen events, attaining goals, integrating (resolving conflict) among members and developing their capacity for success in the longer term.

What should I be doing or asking?

This is a complex image – what should I be doing or asking? The design questions become:

- What structures, processes, policies and practices are working well for us in this group?
- What structures, processes, policies and practices might we want to change or create?
- What would the changed or created structures, processes, policies and practices look like if they were infused with our six principles?

That covers governance structures, processes, policies and practices within work groups – but that's just one relationship location! As you can see there are four relationship locations:

- Within workgroups
- Between work groups
- Up and down the hierarchy
- Between the organization and the outside world

Can you give an example of 'design-in-action' using the cube? Let's take two instances – one dealing with redesign of practices, policies, structures and processes within work groups and the other dealing with redesign of practices, policies, structures and processes that affect the transactions between the organization and its relations with the outside.

Examples redesigning practices, policies, structures and processes within workgroups and between the organization and its environment

Here we might bring together members of one or more work groups for a one or two day Governance Design workshop. Typical workgroup activities for would be:

- Creating a shared understanding of current and likely future requirements for goal attainment, adaptability, integration/coordination with other groups in the organization, and for longer term development of their collective capacity, as well as the legal, ethical and social responsibilities of the group.
- Describing and understanding the contextual enablers of past peak moments with respect to the above, as well as their hopes and aspirations for a workplace that allows them to play to their strengths in ways which create a sense of dignity, meaning and community.

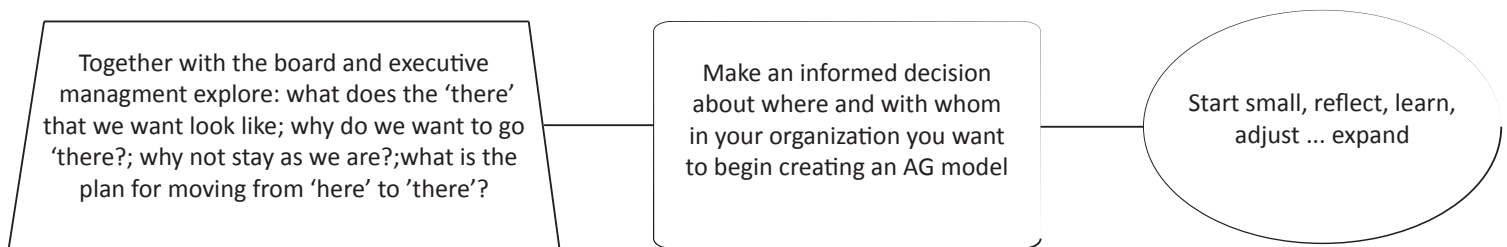


Figure 3: Pulling it altogether – getting started. If you are not having an anxiety attack by now, you are either a real over-achiever or very comfortable with complexity. Consider a simpler image: Three steps for transitioning to AG

- Using the six AG design principles to develop and prototype various combinations of practices, policies and structures (i.e. governance models) for their work groups.
- Sharing and modifying their proposals with other groups as needed.

Redesigning practices, policies, structures and processes between the organization and its environment process might bring together key external stakeholders and those people within the organization who have significant roles related to a particular issue.

As with the prior example, much thought will have been put into defining the specific questions to be answered during the workshop; the activities to be done during the workshop; the boundaries which must be observed and so on. The activities would have the same goals as those for workgroups, with the following adaptations:

- The aspirations would be for a workplace that allows all stakeholders and the organization to play to their strengths.
- The six AG design principles would be used for co-managing the organization/environment relations.

Stacking the deck for success

- Partner with an internal or external resource experienced with positive governance design.
- Find others who are on the same quest.
- Think like a designer/AI practitioner:
 - a. Do your research using narrative-driven strengths-based inquiry
 - b. Innovate without attachment by moving innovative ideas forward through prototype iterations
 - c. Reflect, learn, adjust and implement the best-for-the moment prototype all the while knowing it has to one day inevitably change.



Good luck, do good work, stay connected and share your learning with us please by joining the [LinkedIn](#) discussion!



Neil Samuels

Neil's mission is enabling organizations to flourish by helping leaders re-discover their strengths, clarify their commitments and fundamentally change the conversations with themselves, their teams and their organizations. He believes that conversations characterized by depth and intensity lead to successful, lasting change.

Contact: neil@profoundconversations.com



Cheri Torres

A partner with Innovation Partners International, Cheri works with communities, organizations and schools to intentionally create a culture of engagement, learning and innovation to generate sustainable value for all stakeholders. With PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in Collaborative Learning, she has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles.

Contact: ctorres@innovationpartners.com



Our Journey

Reflections on our Collaboration Studio

In collaboration with the
Appreciative Governance Team

ABSTRACT

This is an overview of our year-long exploration, the challenges we faced and our learnings for the future.

More than a year ago, Sallie, Bernard and Cheri found themselves in a conversation about how AI could inform a new governance model. This model would enable full participation and adaptive flexibility, establish appropriate forms of organizing and focus on sustainable value for all stakeholders. They believed that old governance thinking could not deliver these new desired results, but they didn't know what the 'new' might look like. In late spring, 2010, they proposed an experimental edition of *AI Practitioner* focused on Appreciative Governance and issued an invitation to the AI community in an email on June 17, 2010:

'This is the beginning of an adventure. We are seeking expert practitioners to co-create, in real time, a book and a dedicated issue of *AI Practitioner*, on the topic of "The Design and Practice of Appreciative Governance". On October 3, 4 and 5 of this year, in Asheville, NC. 8-15 highly experienced practitioners will produce working drafts during a 3-day collaboration studio co-hosted by Bernard Mohr, Cheri Torres and Sallie Lee. If interested, please read on and send us your completed Expression of Interest by Friday June 25, 2010.'

So began our adventure, culminating in the *AI Practitioner* issue you have in your hands (or on your screen). Those who engaged in this journey self-selected. We began with varying degrees of experience and knowledge about governance in general, with some apprehension and lots of excitement.

What happened? – October 2010, the Asheville studio

The summer was spent preparing for our first face-to-face studio: reading, researching and sharing relevant information that would help us define governance and eventually Appreciative Governance (AG). In October, ten of us gathered in a marvelously serene setting in Asheville, North Carolina, to officially begin our dialogue. We began by sharing our hopes for our work together: a common theme was the possibility for this work to make a significant

In addition to feeling honored at the invitation, I was more than a little nervous. How could that many people collaborate meaningfully in real time?
Team member

difference for organizations and the world. We knew that this work could provide theoretical and tangible resources for strengths-based practitioners to help create fundamentally different organizations. This belief grew over our months of researching, talking and writing together. It was reinforced in every interview we did – to a person, everyone felt the need to articulate new governance models.

We started our first studio with a rudimentary definition of governance and spent much of our time discussing the attributes of an AG model. Several elements emerged as significant for a model:

- It needed to be grounded in living systems theory, so wholeness, shared purpose, connectivity and sustainability were included.
- It needed to be responsive to changes in its environment, so learning, generativity, innovation and future orientation were important.
- Naturally, it needed to be strengths-based, so full voice, engagement and accountability were also included.

By the end of the three day studio, we had reams of notes, videos and recordings, two rudimentary metaphoric prototypes for AG and a first draft of design principles. We articulated next steps and drafted a rough table of contexts for the AIP issue, with each of us choosing areas of excitement and interest where we could extend the research and write with one another. We also decided on some logistical details that enabled ongoing collaboration. We chose Google docs as our real time, dynamic collaboration space and Dropbox as our 'library' for static items including background reading, agendas, interview notes, and so on.

Looking back, we missed an important step in our initial face-to-face: it turns out to be highly relevant to AG, so we can count ourselves lucky we missed it! We ran into interpersonal dynamics over the course of the year, just like any other group. One person chose to leave the group because of very different expectations of how we would work together. (This was a loss as the contributions made by this person were significant. Yet we realize that not every voice can be part of every process.) What we discovered (and it is no surprise!) was that inviting equality in collaboration takes more than speaking the words and cognitively understanding them. More about this later.

March 2011, the Florida studio

In March, five of us met at the home of Cheri's sister outside Sarasota. (Not a bad time to be there for those of us coming from northern climes.) Since our previous meeting, two writing groups had made great progress on key articles: 'What is AG?' and 'Principles of AG'. Our overarching goal for these two days was to clearly articulate and fine-tune our thinking, and to write collaboratively in order to take both articles to the next level. This was critical, as so many of the other articles depended on them.

Achieving this goal would entail aligning on a number of key points:

1. What is AG? Defining AG in a way that truly reflected everyone's perspectives and precise enough to make a distinction for our field.
2. Determining how the principles distinguish AG from other models of governance and how those principles can be effectively applied.

I loved the face-to-face/ virtual interaction, the productivity of dialogue with real time writing and collaborative creation of the principles, and the opportune way we included in the dialogue those who couldn't be there. Team member

3. Clarifying the difference between governance, management, organizing, leading and changing.

4. Establishing the difference between AG and traditional governance.

5. Determining how a design for an appreciative organization connects to/ overlaps with/reflects our thinking about AG.

In addition, we had to find ways to include members of our team who could not be present in person. Our approach proved very successful, in large part because Bernard, Sallie and Cheri had spent significant time planning that studio so that we were clear:

- In what order we would take on key topics and dialogue areas
- What questions we wanted to inquire into together and
- What outcomes we hoped for

While in Florida, we held daily conference calls for those who could not be present to weigh in on what we had done. It was thrilling to get on those calls, having emailed out our results to fellow AG team members, and be able to get input from them as well as hear their happiness with what we had accomplished.

A point for those interested in collaborative writing: we included a unique process for collaborating on generating ideas for the six principles we'd settled upon. Six of us each took responsibility for drafting a description for one of the principles, which we posted on Google docs. Then, over a two hour period, we hosted a round robin, with each person taking 15 minutes to comment, add and further articulate the other five principles. The initial authors then returned to their original principle and integrated the comments and suggestions from the others. It was a very exciting, real time collaboration among team members who were physically and virtually present in Florida.

We left Florida with three key outcomes:

1. Agreement on a definition of AG, and that designing AG is equivalent to designing an Appreciative Organization;
2. Agreement on the six principles; and,
3. Significant progress on the 'What is AG' article. In addition to focusing the efforts on the two critical articles, our work in Florida provided the foundation needed by the writing teams responsible for the other articles.

Following the Florida studio, writing teams stayed busy producing drafts for review and input from the rest of the team. Using email and three conference calls, we reviewed the status on all of the articles, requested and offered help where needed, proposed additional articles and refined our thinking. For example, the 'personal choice' principle went through a number of name changes: 'agency', 'free choice', 'individual choice' and 'choice', before we settled on 'personal choice'.

Though this may seem trivial, the conversations we had were generative and helped us clarify our thinking and beliefs. There were what seemed like long

It may seem trite, but a highlight for me was that moment five of us were using Google docs to edit one of the articles in real time. I was amazed at how efficient and effective we were in bringing diverse information and views together into the document. Team member

periods with no activity and then a flurry of activity before calls. There has been a grand flurry, in fact a blizzard, as we prepare to send this to Anne Radford for editing!

So what? – Discovering the design in our own work

Researching and writing about the principles of AG proved richly rewarding. The learning garnered from reviewing literature and talking with others in the field was immensely gratifying. Reflection on our experience is providing us with great learning opportunities, not the least of which is the opportunity to see how the design principles played out in the governance of our own process.

Not having had these principles at the outset, we could not have realized how important it would have been to have an opening conversation about how to intentionally design our structures and processes using the principles as guidelines. It seems that three of our six design principles came naturally to us; we worked with an implicit understanding of them. We would have benefited, however, had we engaged in an explicit conversation about the other three.

The principles of emergence, uncertainty and learning seemed to be ‘baked into’ the design of our process. From the very beginning, in how participants were chosen (self-selection), to the flow of our face-to-face sessions, we clearly lived in a world of uncertainty in which the future was ambiguous and uncertain – we improvised using diverse input and collective sense-making; and emergence, where we experienced novelty arising ‘in the context of simple, open interactions – spark the new, encourage curiosity, stay open and pay attention’.

Our face-to-face studio time, along with use of Google docs and Dropbox, exemplified learning in how we generated, collected and transferred new information and knowledge. Much of our time together was spent in collaborative inquiry and cycles of action and reflection.

The other three design principles (wholeness, strengths and personal choice) – which relied more explicitly upon interpersonal dynamics and effective relationships within intentionally designed systems – proved more challenging. We each brought our implicit understandings about what it meant to collaborate as equal members of the team and about what supported full engagement and accountability.

We did not discover the diversity of assumptions and frames around this until long into our work together. Because we did not articulate this upfront, gaining explicit shared understanding about how we would share accountability and what full engagement meant, it impacted how people showed up at various points during the year.

Nonetheless, the personal choice principle was in effect and even without intentional design, we were effective. People did engage and were accountable, volunteering to lead or support research and writing projects based on their own passions, interests and availability. All of us were busy with our own personal lives and consulting projects (or Ph.D. dissertations).

Yet by using our own discretion, making and then acting upon our informed choices and being held accountable for the consequences of our actions by the group, we were able to produce the work you now have. Had we had an upfront

Had we had an upfront conversation about the personal choice principle, however, we probably would have invited a great deal more co-ownership of some of the processes.

conversation about the personal choice principle, however, we probably would have invited a great deal more co-ownership of some of the processes and reduced the stress many of us experienced, or at the very least, established a process for quickly handling issues that arose.

We struggled a bit in bringing to life the more relational principles of strengths and wholeness. In our rush to task, some of our unspoken assumptions and preconceived beliefs about how we would work together inhibited our ability to weave our own core strengths, skills and competencies together to help build our energy and collective capacity. Again the lesson: these principles require making time for essential dialogue and establishing processes that facilitate effective conversations when conflict or issues emerge.

We also occasionally lost connection with our wholeness – that each of us is whole in and of ourselves *and* a part of the collaborative team at the same time. Some important lessons about wholeness include compassion and love – for one another and for oneself. Conversations reflect differences in perspectives, frames and experiences with an eye to moving toward greater levels of awareness and wholeness. If we had focused up front on our own capacity to have such conversations, we would have ensured the resiliency of each of us as individuals, relieved stresses more rapidly and maximized our own potential energy.

It would have been immensely valuable for us at our first meeting in Asheville to have had an opening conversation about how to design structures and processes for these three principles:

We might have reflected on strengths so that we could design with this in mind. Questions we might have explored include:

- What specific strengths do we each bring to this work team and how can we best engage with one another's strengths?
- Followed by using this information to develop processes or structures that help us stay awake to one another's capacities in their ebb and flow.

We might have explored the assumptions, expectations and motivations that each of us held at the outset, especially with regard to what it means to engage and be accountable. We might have asked these questions:

- What does it mean to co-commit and share full accountability for a group project? This is different from each of us taking our own piece of the project and going off to work on it, then assuming that someone will manage the whole. How to manage the whole is a question that many self-organizing groups end up asking.
- What am I committing to? What are we each accountable to make happen (i.e. scheduling meetings, taking leadership, holding one another accountable, acknowledging efforts) vs. a particular project?
- What assumptions, thoughts, feelings, concerns and hopes are we each holding that will impact our ability to commit fully?

An important learning for us here was that the practical implementation of the design principles requires conversation and dialogue. Team member

- How will we hold ourselves accountable and stay engaged with each other?
- What will make it successful and rewarding for each of us?
- What do I need from others to stay fully engaged?

We might have engaged in a significant conversation about what it means to truly work together from a position of wholeness and how that would impact our reactions, responses, thinking and willingness to show up. Questions such as these might have occurred:

- What does it mean to ensure transparency and to continue operating at the level of wholeness, and not drop back into transactions?
- What competencies do we need, which do we have and how do we expand them?
- What practices and processes can we create to support our own practice of wholeness?
- What will it take to make our spaces safe?
- How do we translate conflict, negative reactions and dissonance into opportunities for a greater sense of wholeness?

What we have learned about working collaboratively

Assembling a core group of people passionate and committed to innovating something positive for society certainly created a strong foundation for working collaboratively. To discover other factors, we asked team members to respond to the question 'What do you think are three key behaviors or attitudes that help make collaboration successful?'

A few themes emerged:

Respect for each person's contribution

- Value others' input even if it does not initially match your information or belief system.
- Continually acknowledge contributions and offer thanks.
- Assume good intentions; seek to clarify and understand.
- Embrace multiple, diverse frames and perspectives and slow down enough to hear the differences.
- Ask questions and put ideas out there boldly; be persistent and let go.

Trust the process:

- Take the time for dialogue in learning and creating together.
- Be open to the learning that the process itself is offering in addition to the information it reveals.
- Allow for the ebb and flow of energy and attention; accept that everyone is committed and that commitment will look different.

- Ensure clarity/alignment and understanding on vision, goals, definitions, timelines, expectations and 'contracts' with one another.
- Do what you say you will do or communicate an alternative; earn trust.

Remain Appreciative:

- Give timely feedback appreciatively; i.e. by starting with what is working well and follow with hopes and suggestions to make it better.
- Work from an appreciative listening space.

Now what? – Putting AG into practice and expanding the dialogue

Given our learning about the importance of conversation in relationship to designing effective structures and processes, here is how the team plans to move forward as we look toward a broader conversation with readers and other thought leaders:

First, engage in a deep inquiry into our project to discover and learn from our best moments of working together and our greatest insights about how this AIP issue reflects upon our own governance going forward (i.e. what can we learn from ourselves?)

Reflect upon that inquiry and imagine our work together (as we plan to continue and expand this into further contributions to the field, including a book).

Using the design principles, develop our own intentional set of structures and processes to support the achievement of our goals and vision. This naturally will include routine reflection, learning and evolution in our awareness of what it means to govern appreciatively.

The fact that you are reading this means we have initiated the above and we've designed at least an initial set of structures and processes to support the ongoing conversation, discovery, dialogue and evolution of Appreciative Governance in the short run. You are invited to join us today; learn with us, bring your experiences, wisdom, strengths and creativity into designing and evolving a governance model that will work for all of us tomorrow!

The Appreciative Governance team including Ashley Cooper and Matt Glenn, who did an exceptional job scribing for the Asheville Studio



The Appreciative Governance Team
Joan Hoxsey, Joep C. de Jong, Bob Laliberte, Sallie Lee,
Patti Millar, Bernard J. Mohr, Dan Saint, Neil Samuels
and Cheri Torres



Appreciative Governance: A Summary

ABSTRACT

This final article provides a synopsis of this issue of AI Practitioner so that you can share these ideas with clients and colleagues. It is meant to provide you with a context for conversation and an invitation to others to read this issue and join in the dialogue on Appreciative Governance.

What is governance?

For our purpose, governance is the set of all activities that guide the functioning of a human system and its many interdependent parts within its environment. These activities occur within a governance architecture (i.e. structures and processes) that both directs and enables members to:

- Set direction or purpose
- Make decisions assuring the fulfillment of their purpose
- Set the standards of relationship, behavior and accountability

What is Appreciative Governance?

The structures and processes of governance play a central role in determining whether organizations die, survive or flourish. Given our growing knowledge of human systems and changes in our understanding about the way the world of living systems works, Appreciative Governance (AG) offers organizations a strategy for thriving in today's global, complex and uncertain world.

Appreciative Governance is distinct from traditional forms of governance in three essential ways:

- First, there is an intentional commitment to distribute decision-making throughout the organization.
- Second, AG capitalizes on individual and collective strengths to achieve organizational vision and mission.
- Finally, AG is grounded in human systems theory and social constructionism, which translates into active support of self-organizing systems within organizational boundaries.

In this view, governance occurs continuously as people set direction, or organize, and act within their own arenas of accountability. In the AG model, the functions of governance are carried out by everyone in the organization in a way that is directly linked to their sphere of influence and particular strengths.

Functions of governance

Historically, governance has been focused on compliance and control. Governance structures and process have been designed to 'fix' gaps and address human weaknesses. This overlooks some of the primary functions of governance. Governing is essentially about mobilizing human capability toward:

1. Adapting in timely and effective ways to changing circumstances
2. Setting and attaining goals
3. Integrating and coordinating effort
4. Developing capacity for long-term sustainability

This AGIL model is a useful conception of what the governance architecture must be designed to accomplish in organizations today.

Traditional view of governance	Appreciative Governance
Emphasizes controlling or preventing behavior that is illegal, unethical or detrimental to the interests of shareholders.	Emphasizes mobilizing or encouraging behavior that is legal, ethical and positive to the long-term interests of shareholders and stakeholders. Affirms the traditional posture of deterrence toward behavior that is antithetical to those interests.
May overlook organizational strengths and adaptive capacity in an effort to monitor and control for potential threat.	Illuminates and broadly accesses organizational strengths, resources and assets as part of governance design.
Views the board of directors as the key actors in governing.	Proposes governance carried out by all members of the organization and acknowledges that governance is influenced by stakeholders far beyond the formal corporate boundaries. Affirms that the structure and function of the board remains an essential aspect of the governance architecture that can benefit from AG design principles.
Focuses on board activities: the selection and compensation of senior management; advising management; accurate financial reporting and adequate compliance efforts.	Focuses on the range of behavior available from all employees, includes the four AGIL functions of governance and operates with a social constructionist frame.
Begins with a problem prevention point of view and is advocacy-driven.	Begins from a strengths-based perspective and is inquiry-driven.

The question being pursued is this: What does it look like if the notion of shared governance is expanded? What if we also emphasize strengths-based, positive management? Consider organizational commitments beyond the bottom

line? Design for sustainability within an 'economy and ecology of strengths' (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2010)?

With this in mind, we recommend a radical shift from the traditional view of governance in order to help organizations conceive of a governance architecture that broadens and builds capacity to survive and thrive in a complex world. The following chart clarifies some key differences between the AG model and traditional perspectives.

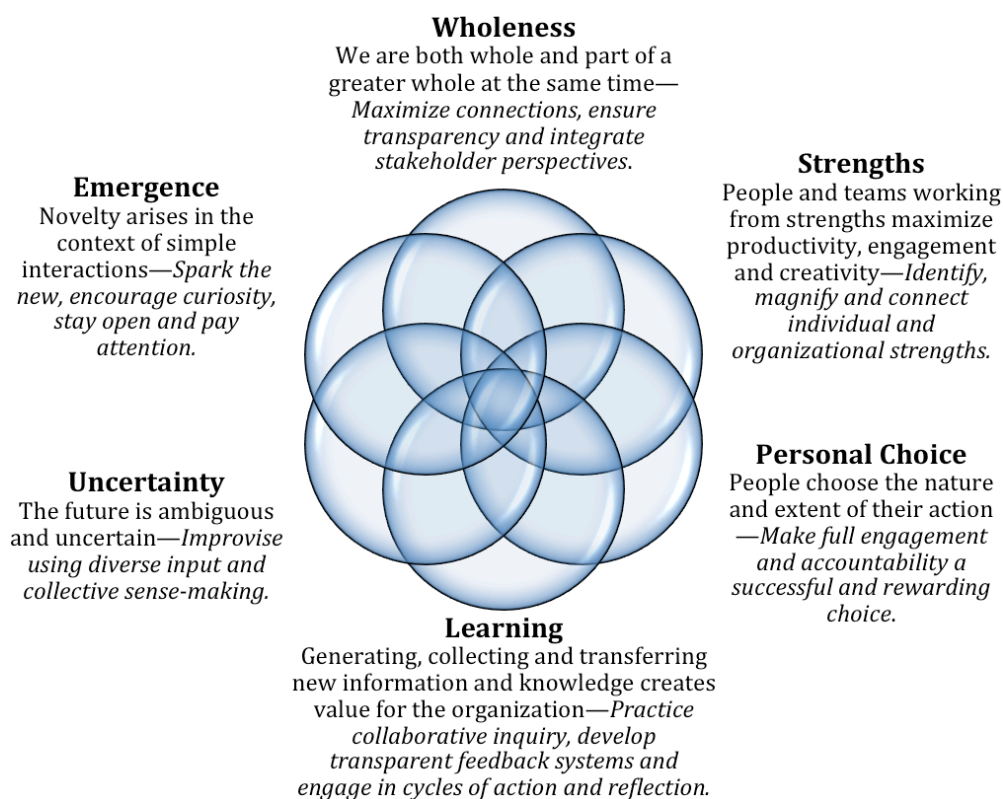
We are not alone in proposing alternative views of governance. Shared governance as a topic of interest and operational practice is being advocated by many, particularly in the healthcare arena. These efforts mark important milestones along the continuum of governance development. However, because the AG model proposes that the governance architecture be designed according to fundamental principles, we believe the AG model is a further evolution, beyond even the perhaps-revolutionary concept of 'sharing' governance among organizational members.

AG principles

AG offers a set of principles that help intentionally design structures and processes to capitalize on individual and collective strengths, as well as maximize the capacity of the whole. The six design principles allow for the distribution of governance across the system in ways that support excellence and sustainable growth opportunities.

These principles, interdependent and mutually inclusive, together create the fabric of the system.

Figure 1: The six design principles of AG



Transitioning to AG

For some time, we have been hearing organizational leaders say that they want more engagement and connection with their people, more collective intelligence exhibited in their organizations, greater employee accountability and more flexible, adaptive work systems. They want new and better outcomes. Old governance thinking cannot sustain these new desired behaviors.

A participative (re)design of governance structures and processes by all the stakeholders is essential in most organizations and networks to move along the path to AG. This is a view that is vastly different from a history where the design of governance and control systems has been almost exclusively the purview of accountants, lawyers and economists responding to negative situations.

Consider an invitation to join in the very human endeavor of intentionally and creatively bringing into being a desired future, with full consideration of constraints: a process of co-creation and generative innovation in what work is done, where work is done, when it is done, with whom it is done, how it is done and the policies, structures and systems within which it is done – all with the idea of aligning our strengths in ways that Peter Drucker once said so clearly, 'make our weaknesses irrelevant'.

Imagine the possibility that Appreciative Governance design might be more than changing the boxes on the 'org chart'; more than eliminating 'waste'; and more than simply reassigning people to new groups. Imagine that we might, together, generate a much more life-giving social architecture, one that finds us looking forward to the work week with positive anticipation.

Any transition to AG will require sufficient commitment to see the organization through the significant allocation of time, resources and stewardship. A good starting place is to explore the answers to the following questions in relation to a new model of governance:

- What does the 'there' that we most want look like?
- Why would we want to get to 'there'? What would we gain? Why not just stay as we are?
- What is the plan for moving from 'here to there'?



Join the [LinkedIn](#) dialogue to discuss this topic.

References

Godwin, L. N. and D. Cooperrider. (2010, August 10). *Positive Organization Development: Innovation-inspired Change in an Economy and Ecology of Strengths*. Retrieved June 9, 2011, from Appreciative Inquiry Commons: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/comment.cfm>



Lena Holmberg

has a Ph.D. in Educational Research, worked as a consultant and manager in an IT company and started the AI consulting company Apprino. With Jan Reed, she was guest editor of the November 2007 issue of *AI Practitioner* which focused on AI and research.

Contact: lmholmberg@gmail.com
lenamholmberg.blogspot.com



Jan Reed

Ph.D. B.A, RN has been involved in research for many years. She has a nursing qualification, and teaches and supervises healthcare students at Northumbria University. She is well known for her ground-breaking book, *Appreciative Inquiry: Research for Change*.

Contact: jreedhexham@gmail.com



AI Research Notes

edited by Lena Holmberg and Jan Reed

AI Research Notes carries news of AI research developments. We'd like to make it as collaborative and appreciative as we can – we know that many of you are working and thinking about the relationship between academic research and AI, and that you have news, comments and questions which we'd like you to contribute.

Only the Writing is Left: Transforming Doctoral Students' Scholarly Writing

Katrina L. Rodriguez, PhD
University of Northern Colorado
Katrina.Rodriguez@unco.edu

Jana L. Schwartz, PhD
University of Northern Colorado
Jana.Schwartz@unco.edu

Veronica M. Richard, PhD
Indiana University Northwest
verricha@iun.edu

Maria. K. E. Lahman, PhD
University of Northern Colorado
Maria.Lahman@unco.edu

Through the title 'Only the Writing is Left' we evoke a common statement uttered during the research process and specifically the thesis/dissertation process at the point in which data collection and analysis are seemingly complete. This statement naively compartmentalizes writing into a discrete time period that occurs after data analysis and is under the control of the writer. What this statement masks is the time spent gazing into thin air, staring at a blank screen or muttering imprecations to one's self with which all writers are familiar. Much of the struggle to move research into a written representation is obscured from novice researchers. This struggle might include personal fear, a part of all writing (Cixous, 1997), or a lack of mentorship due to time constraints, an inability to articulate a seemingly magical process, or to the mentors' personal struggle with scholarship.

With this difficulty in mind, Maria developed a doctoral qualitative research writing course to remedy gaps she keenly felt in her own experience. The course purpose was to transform students' experiences in scholarly writing from a process thought of as mystical and easy (Colyar, 2008), yet riddled with self-doubt and negative experiences (Cixous, 1997) to a demystified, transparent and achievable process.

The course was designed as an in-depth examination of the role writing plays in qualitative research data collection, analysis and representation with students using data from a variety of research activities. We have been instructors since the course's inception; two of us were originally students.

I noticed a transformation from trepidation to sincere anticipation of working together.

For this study, we drew on the Inquire aspect of Appreciative Inquiry's 4I-model (Watkins and Mohr, 2001) to illuminate the transformation in writing competencies students experienced as a result of an intentional, strengths-based pedagogy, similar to other researchers using AI as a teaching method (e.g. Billings and Kowalski, 2008; Frazier, 2008). Specifically, we explored what students believed fostered their growth as writers in the academic setting. This served as the foundation for building our pedagogical practices (Reed and Holmberg, 2007).

Thus, we implemented intentional, strengths-based pedagogical practices including opening activities to spark writing, creativity and differing perspectives, leading to the main focus of creating three different writing representations from one data set (Richardson, 1990): the traditional qualitative article; an 'alternative' form (e.g. poetry, a play); and a practical form of choice (e.g. pamphlet; conference poster). Once the course ended, all 17 students provided permission to use their assignments as research artifacts. In addition, we conducted a focus group of eight participants to ascertain participant writing reflections six months post-course.

Fry (2007) and Hammond (1996) referred to AI as a means to inquire about a phenomenon, focusing on shared meaning and leading to future possibilities through purposeful action. In this way, AI is about understanding something to value it. In using AI, the people involved participate in 'be-ing with each other,' engaging as change occurs (Fry, 2007, p. ix).

Focusing on AI methods, Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008) argued people construct their truth through historical narratives – that is, 'past stories, ideas, beliefs, meaning and theories' (p. 15) – and the historical narratives of others. Therefore, in order to change a history of deficit, debilitation and negativity, narratives of hope, promise and positive affirmation must be put in place.

To foster quality shared experiences, we began each class with a reflective writing activity to bring about students' stories, ideas and beliefs resulting in both negative and positive narratives. These activities included (a) developing descriptive writing skills by having students recount past experiences using their senses, (b) viewing scenic art and describing the setting, and (c) drawing a visual representation of the doctoral process. After each activity, students shared their writing in pairs and then volunteers shared aloud in the large group. In sharing, students made meaning of their experiences, often leading to the transformation of their negative narratives of writing and academic-life issues.

Colyar (2008) claimed 'writing should be included more intentionally in our research methods courses. Writing is not simply what we "do," but also how we become better writers and scholars' (p. 1). Therefore, the course included writing three different forms of representation based on one data set. Additionally, we provided an opportunity for shared experiences to flourish as students collaborated weekly with their peers in formalized writing groups. This intentional process became the main source of transformation of students' beliefs about writing and about themselves as writers.

The freedom to disregard perfection provided a space where a joy for writing could return.

Findings

In order to capture a sense of the multiple instructor/researcher voices engaged with these data we relay the findings in a narrative fashion from a perspective that, while reflected in the data, also captured the particular author's memories.

Katrina

Writing groups were the highlight activity for students. Meeting weekly for the last 90 minutes of a three-hour class, students gathered in self-selected writing groups. All group members read drafts, resulting in three to four critiques for each author. While observing writing group interactions, I noticed a transformation from trepidation, as students selected group members on day one, to sincere anticipation of working together as the semester proceeded.

Group members negotiated feedback processes while prioritizing time to discuss personal and academic matters. Often I heard bursts of laughter, saw heads gathered closely as tearful difficulties were shared and witnessed 'high-fives' in celebration of achievements.

Transformation occurred continuously as students gained confidence in providing and receiving feedback. One student said:

'Usually I submit final papers at the end of my classes. [This] helps me 'zero' with my writing process since I spend all my time gaining [content] knowledge (which is never ending) throughout the semester and not much time actually writing.'

Further, the writing group provided support beyond the writing and served as a means of therapy. Another student shared, 'we really connected as a group and it felt very safe to just talk ... about the trifles of graduate school and academia with people who could relate and offer advice.' At semester end, many students continued the writing group model for other academic projects.

Jana

Unveiling the complexities of the writing process through discussions and class readings coupled with an affirming space to practice writing provided the environment in which transformation could occur. The readings for this course included Lamott's (1994) *Bird by Bird*. Students described Lamott's concept of a 'shitty first draft' as liberating. The freedom to disregard perfection provided a space where a joy for writing could return, as one student reflected:

'As a writer I have grown in many ways. First, through the readings I have learned that because I struggle with the process of writing does not mean I should stop trying or that my writing is bad. Bird by Bird was one of the best books to teach me this. If a well-established author can have shitty first drafts, then I sure as heck can! I also became more open to feedback about my writing style ... It's amazing how inspiring and refreshing it can be to write academically without worrying about a grade.'

Creating a safe space for students to explore their feelings of apprehension and recognize those as a typical part of the writing process allowed students to view themselves as not only normal but capable and competent. One student thanked her peers for their authenticity in sharing their struggles, 'Writing was not something I felt great about. I know that I am not alone in these feelings.'

Additionally, this course provided space for students to practice writing. Upon reflection, students noted the overwhelming volume of writing they produced in the course. The start of each class began with a reflective writing assignment. While at times students felt the exercises were trivial, at others they became quite personal; regardless, students had the opportunity to 'just write' without personal or academic critique.

One student noted that 'When in graduate work do students get to practice writing without being judged? Not very often. I believe my skills as a writer have grown simply through practice and I know that it will take more practice for this to continue. This course has given me a model for how to do this.' The ability to sincerely engage with the writing process was critical to the students' success in the course.

Maria and Veronica

One class period is dedicated to the reading and construction of research poetry where students use their research transcripts to form the most salient words into poetry. This nontraditional process can be an uncomfortable and/or a transforming experience. Eric, a research methodology student using structural equation modeling for his dissertation, enrolled in the course to improve his writing and research consulting abilities.

Not anticipating writing poetry, Eric commented that 'On the night Maria and Veronica gave the poetry talk, I knew I would not be interested – I hate poetry! But during their talk, the way Veronica explained how to write poetry from a transcript completely changed my mind. The poetry exercise we did in class was the start of two poems I wrote!'

During class, Eric worked with transcripts of undergraduate students sharing their thoughts when a friend who was gay killed himself. While Eric participated in the activity with some trepidation, he was surprised to see how powerful the words were in the new form. Ultimately, Eric published his poem in the *Journal of Qualitative Inquiry* (Teman, 2010) and feels it was a powerful contribution to the research literature.

Eric's experience highlights two of the primary themes identified in the data. First, students felt the class was a place where they felt safe. They could make mistakes, practice and grow – what one student referred to as a place to 'explore my style, make mistakes.' Second, students felt their creativity was tapped into, valued and encouraged. The poetry class period had great impact with one student saying, 'I can break from traditional writing and still be published!'

Conclusion

University writing experiences have multiple meanings (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002). For these doctoral students, the meanings developed into writing, both traditional and non-traditional, to publish and the meanings developed into identity and competence. 'Only the Writing is Left' took on new meaning and transformed students' scholarly writing experience.

References

- Billings, D. M., and K. Kowalski. (2008) 'Appreciative Inquiry,' *Journal of Continuing Education Nursing*, 39(3), 104.
- Cixous, H. (1997) *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*. London: Routledge.
- Colyar, J. (2008) 'Becoming Writing, Becoming Writers,' *Qualitative Inquiry Online* First, June 27, 2008. doi:10.1177/1077800408318280
- Cooperrider, D. L., D. Whitney and J. M. Stavros. (2008) *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook for Leaders of Change* (2nd Ed.) Brunswick, Ohio: Crown Custom.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2002) 'Writing as Inquiry: Storying the Teaching Self in Writing Workshops,' *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(4), 403-428.
- Frazier, D. (2008) 'Teaching With the Four D's of Appreciative Inquiry,' *Agricultural Education*, 80(6), 13-14.
- Fry, R. (2008) Forward. in D. L. Cooperrider, D. Whitney and J. M. Stavros. *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook for Leaders of Change* (2nd ed., pp. vi-ix). Brunswick, Ohio: Crown Custom.
- Hammond, S. A. (1996) *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (2nd ed.). Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing.
- Lamont, A. (1994) *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Reed, J. and L. Holmberg. (2007) 'Impact of Appreciative Inquiry on Research: Experiences, Reflections and Thoughts For The Future,' *AI Practitioner*, 1-4.
- Richardson, L. (1990) 'Writing: A Method of Inquiry.' In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Teman, E. (2010) 'Now He's Not Alive,' *Qualitative Inquiry*. Retrieved from <http://qix.sagepub.com/content/early/recent>
- Watkins, J. and Mohr, B. (2001) *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

**Jackie Stavros**

DM, is Associate Professor and DBA Program Chair, College of Management at Lawrence Technological University, has co-authored books, book chapters and articles including *Thin Book of SOAR: Building-Strengths-Based Change*. She consults and provides training using strength-based whole system approaches.

Contact: jstavros@comcast.net

**Dawn Dole**

is Executive Director of the Taos Institute and the Knowledge Manager of the Appreciative Inquiry Commons (<http://ai.case.edu>). She also consults with schools, businesses, churches and non-profits to bring about positive and collaborative change.

Contact: info@taosinstitute.net
www.taosinstitute.net



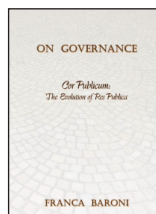
AI Resources

edited by Jackie Stavros and Dawn Dole

AI Resources features a rediscovery of classic and new resources for your use. Resources will include list-serves, books, journal articles, book chapters, DVDs, websites, blogs, podcasts, etc. ... all in one place useful for learning more about AI to help with your consulting practice, internal work, teaching, training and extending your knowledge base and resources.

This November 2011 issue of *AI Practitioner* is on Appreciative Governance. The Appreciative Governance Team explores the various roles that AI might play in the larger structures of governance and how it might inform the designing of governance processes.

The resources included in this column are recommended readings from the the AG team. Most of the resources do not deal with AI specifically. In their research and reading for this project over the past year, the Editors found these resources especially helpful and thought-provoking. Some of the resources gave the editors very specific cases to consider; some expanded their frames of reference. There are many more books and articles referenced in the articles throughout this issue. This list was specially selected by the editing team as resources that stood out for them. Here they are. Enjoy.

Books**On Governance**

Baroni, Frana. (2011) Samsara Press. ISBN: 978-0-9833415-6-7.

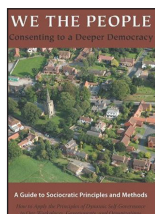
This book provides a radical approach to looking at governance. Illustrated are two key aspects in her work that justify her views on the absolute need to look at governance from the collective (it is all about social contracts and the awareness of the individual and collective selves). Secondly, her views on heart intelligence and consideration that authority is nothing more than a mirage invite us to revisit our traditional views on governance and to explore new possibilities.



Change By Design

Brown, Tim. (2009) New York: Harper Collins. ISBN: 978-0061766084.

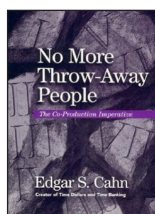
Tim Brown is a leading thinker and practitioner in the field of design. The design of appreciative governance systems is the challenge we all share in common.



We the People: Consenting to a Deeper Democracy

Buck, John and Sharon Villines. (2007) Sociocracy.info Press. <http://Sociocracy.info>. ISBN: 978-0979282706.

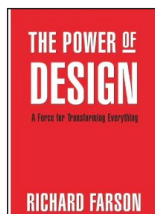
This book provides an excellent overview of the background, principles and applications of Sociocracy/Dynamic Governance.



No More Throw-Away People

Cahn, Edgar. (2004) Time Banks USA. ISBN: 978-1893520028.

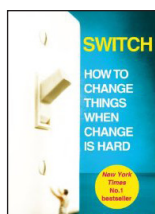
It has been said that this book is a battle cry meant to help people re-evaluate the place of money in their lives – we automatically equate money with personal value. Cahn suggests another way of being in the world through the development of time dollars where people exchange time for value. The book tells many stories of how lives have been significantly changed through the use of these time dollars.



The Power of Design: A Force for Transforming Everything

Farson, Richard. (2008) Norcross, GA: Greenway Communications. ISBN: 978-0978555283.

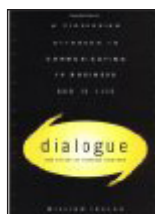
Richard Farson is a leading thinker and practitioner in the field of design. The design of appreciative governance systems is the challenge we all share.



Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard

Heath, Dan and Chip Heath. (2010) New York: Broadway Books. ISBN: 978-0385528757.

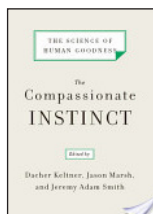
An engaging book that focuses on finding the best in different situations (Bright Spots), with surprising information on human behavior, and how to grow your people to bring out the best in your organization or situation.



Dialogue and the Art of Thinking

Isaacs, William. (1999) New York: Doubleday. ISBN: 978-0385479998.

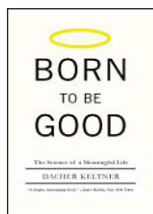
A classic book that blends the theory and practice of Dialogue to impact fundamentally change conversations. Isaacs offers concrete ideas for listening and speaking; for avoiding the forces that undermine meaningful conversation; for changing the physical setting of the dialogue to change its quality.



The Compassionate Instinct: The Science of Human Goodness

Keltner, Dacher, Jason Marsh and Jeremy Adam Smith, Eds. (2010)

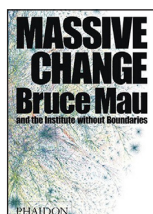
New York: WW Norton and Company. ISBN: 978-0393337280. This book of 35 essays from 33 authors brings us the neuroscientific roots of compassion and empathy, along with cultivating kindness and goodness in society. Originally published from 2004-2009 in *Greater Good* magazine.



Born to be Good

Keltner, Dacher. (2010) New York: WW Norton and Company. ISBN: 978-0393337136.

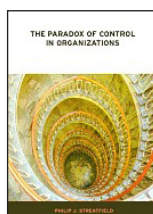
This book traces Keltner's research into compassion as a natural instinct in human beings meant to help us live together in community. Keltner makes a compelling case for compassion being an extraordinarily important virtue in all relationships and the basis of all human interaction.



Massive Change

Mau, Bruce. (2008) New York: Phaidon Press. ISBN: 978-0714844015.

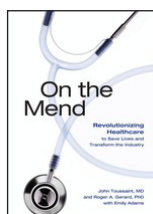
Bruce Mau is a leading thinker and practitioner in the field of design. This volume has many illustrations that bring together designs and theories (mostly Western) and photographers (global) that 'tap into global commons', and presents solutions for accountability.



The Paradox of Control in Organizations

Streatfield, Philip. (2001) London: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0415250320.

Written by a senior manager at a pharmaceutical company, this book explores the paradox of 'being in charge' without being 'in control', a situation that drives many leaders to distraction. Through his own lived experiences, Streatfield illuminates the leadership challenges in this complex, uncertain, self-organizing world.



On the Mend: Revolutionizing Healthcare to Save Lives and Transform the Industry

Toussaint, John, Roger Gerard and Adams Emily. (2010) Cambridge, MA: Lean Enterprise Institute. ISBN: NA. ASIN: B003QCINDA.

This book describes the use of LEAN in a healthcare setting (ThedaCare) and illustrates many ways to engage stakeholders in innovation and decision-making to create a lean healthcare environment.

Key Research Articles

Novus International, Human Resources. (July 2010). *Requisite Organization at Novus International, Inc. – The Novus Management System: Establishing a Common Vocabulary and Toolset*.

The article describes the implementation of Requisite Organization (RO) tools and management practices in an international company. RO offers insight into strategies for creating structures and processes that align with some of the appreciative governance design principles.

Peij, Stefan C., Pieter-Jan Bezemer, Han van Halder and Gregory F. Maassen. (Feb 2010). 'The Changing Role of the Supervisory Chairman,' *Journal of Management and Governance*.

Based on a Dutch case, this article looks into the differences of one and two tier boards and the role of the chairmen in those boards. It is based on interviews with the chairmen of companies listed on the Dutch stock exchange. The article puts the researchers' work on appreciative governance in a wider perspective: that of the international environment, especially in continental Europe where there is still an ongoing discussion about the different type of boards and their respective pros and cons.

Special issue: Video Essays on Innovation



Innovation² and Appreciative Inquiry: Positive Images, Positive Action

Guest editor: Ada Jo Mann, Joanne Daykin and Lisa Hirsh, Innovation Partners International



Focus of Examples will include:

- What are the breakthroughs, and next generation stories that demonstrate the life giving factors in the practice of AI?
- Where are the innovative connections that enrich the practice of AI with individuals, teams, communities or business
- Scaling up AI through powerful conversations brings about changes we could never have imagined. What stories take us into a space far beyond what had been thought possible

This issue of AI Practitioner is being created for the 2012 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference in Ghent Belgium. This is being made possible, in part, by a grant from the Taos Institute.

To make sure you receive your notification when it is ready, [register online](#) for the free AIP enews, go to facebook.com/aipractitioner or follow us on Twitter @AIPractitioner



Lena Holmberg

has a Ph.D. in Educational Research, worked as a consultant and manager in an IT company and started the AI consulting company Apprino. With Jan Reed, she was guest editor of the November 2007 issue of *AI Practitioner* which focused on AI and research.

Contact: lmholmberg@gmail.com
lenamholmberg.blogspot.com



Jan Reed

Ph.D. B.A, RN has been involved in research for many years. She has a nursing qualification, and teaches and supervises healthcare students at Northumbria University. She is well known for her ground-breaking book, *Appreciative Inquiry: Research for Change*.

Contact: jreedhexham@gmail.com



About the February 2012 Issue: Making Learning the Spark of Transformation

Appreciative Inquiry has a natural affinity for learning. The February 2011 of *AI Practitioner* issue uses the 4D model of AI to explore learning in all its different possibilities: environments, resources, contexts and roles. We hope to spark ideas and inspirations about the connections between AI and learning.

In the next issue of *AI Practitioner* we will focus on learning. Appreciative Inquiry has a natural affinity with learning, if we take learning to be a process of development, growth and transformation, rather than a punitive, limiting experience.

Learning, in this positive sense, can be a process of uncovering skills and strengths, bringing them forward as a basis for practice and further learning. The links between AI and learning can resonate with many people, in different places. This can be in different countries and cultures, where learning can happen in different environments, with different resources and contexts. It can also happen at different places in personal development, where people can be thinking about learning, beginning learning, or reflecting on it.

People can be in different places in their learning: in formal educational institutions or in workplaces. They can also have different roles in the learning process – as students or teachers, for example.

We wanted to try to cover as many of these dimensions as possible, so we put out a wide call for papers. We also wanted to have some way of organising the issue, and so we used the 4D model of AI, asking writers to focus on the discovery, dreaming, design or delivery aspects of AI. The response was good; many responded with article outlines. The responses were from people in all areas of learning, and the outlines they sent were fascinating.

We had to focus for this issue, which meant choosing some outlines and not others, a process which meant that many papers could not be included. We hope that the writers of these papers can find other ways of spreading their ideas. We also hope that the issue that we did put together will spark ideas and inspiration for all readers thinking about the connections between AI and learning.



[Back to Table of Contents](#)

IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information



International Advisory Practitioners Group IAPG

Members of the International Advisory Practitioners Group working with AIP to bring AI stories to a wider audience:

Druba Acharya, Nepal

Anastasia Bukashe, South Africa

Gervase Bushe, Canada

Sue Derby, Canada

Sara Inés Gómez, Colombia

Lena Holmberg, Sweden

Joep C. de Jong, Netherlands

Dorothe Liebig, Germany

John Loty, Australia

Sue James, Australia

Maureen McKenna, Canada

Liz Mellish, Australia

Dayle O'Brien, Australia

Jan Reed, United Kingdom

Catriona Rogers, Hong Kong

Daniel K. Saint, United States

Marge Schiller, United States

Jackie Stavros, United States

Bridget Woods, South Africa

Jacqueline Wong, Singapore

Margaret Wright, United Kingdom

AIP Subscriptions

Individuals

NGOS, students and community groups

Small organisations

University/Research Institutes

Large organisations

<http://www.aipracticitioner.com/subscriptions>

Back Issues and Articles

<http://www.aipracticitioner.com/issues>

<http://www.aipracticitioner.com/articles>

Change of subscriber details

<http://www.aipracticitioner.com/customer/account/login>

Publication Advertising/Sponsorship

For the advertising rates, contact Anne Radford.

Disclaimer: Views and opinions of the writers do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy but all details are subject to alteration. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies.

Purpose of AI Practitioner

This publication is for people interested in making the world a better place using positive relational approaches to change such as Appreciative Inquiry.

The publication is distributed quarterly: February, May, August and November.

AI Practitioner Editor/Publisher

The editor-in-chief and publisher is Anne Radford. She is based in London and can be reached at editor@aipracticitioner.com

The postal address for the publication is:
303 Bankside Lofts, 65 Hopton Street, London SE1 9JL,
England.

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7633 9630

Fax: +44 (0)845 051 8639

ISSN 1741 8224

Shelagh Aitken is the issue editor for AI Practitioner.
She can be reached at editor@seaproofread.co.uk

AI Practitioner © 2003-2011 Anne Radford

