



Introducing Appreciative Governance

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

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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.

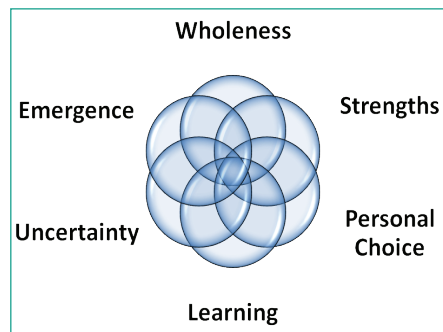
Organizational Design Principles for Appreciative Governance

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

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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.



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Purpose of AI Practitioner

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