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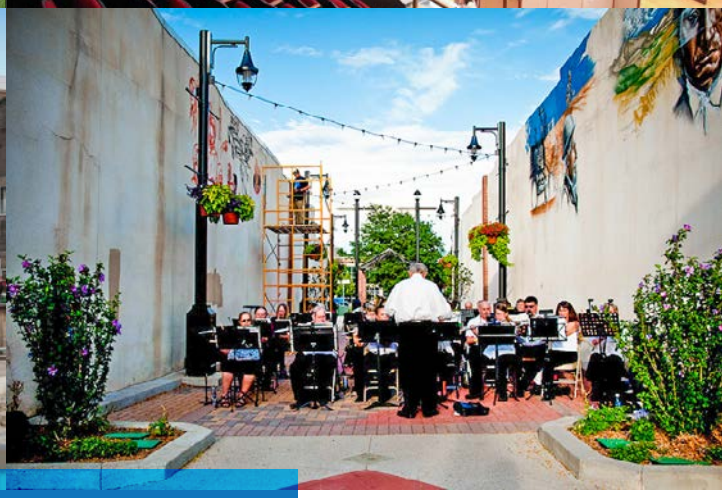

The Promise of Appreciative Cities

Compelling the Whole to Act

Barbara Lewis
Karen Roney

AIPractitioner.com

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AI Practitioner

Inside this issue

Welcome to November 2013 issue of AI Practitioner

"The Promise of Appreciative Cities: Compelling the Whole to Act" is full of detailed examples where cities have applied AI: in Police, Fire, Purchasing and Transportation departments; community engagement in major regeneration initiatives and local initiatives supporting a region's long-term vision. Editors Barbara Lewis and Karen Roney, who live in the United States and have been involved in award-winning work in this area, describe how cities have embedded AI over many years and set out the promise of even greater AI use.

In the Feature Choice, Dayle O'Brien in Australia describes a change and transition theory, Four Rooms of Change, that she has found invaluable in her coaching practice. Taking a strengths-based approach to the model, she describes how people move through the Rooms and learn to love change.

In this Research Notes, Jan Reed says "Goodbye and keep going" as she feels it is time to hand over to others. We thank her for her skill and wisdom in developing the column over four years. Showcased in the column is a study of Caravaggio's paintings using AI as the research framework.

In AI Resources we welcome a new editorial team: Matt Moehle (USA), and Roopa Nandi and Hardik Shah (India). They bring their research, academic and consulting backgrounds to develop the next phase of this column.

Anne Radford
Editor, AI Practitioner

4 Issue Introduction
This edition of AI Practitioner looks at how cities, their governments and communities have been using AI over many years
Barbara Lewis and Karen Roney

7 Feature Choice
Learning to Love Change: Taking the Strengths Approach to Moving Through the Four Rooms of Change
A strengths approach combined with a change and transition model proves a valuable part of Dayle's coaching practice
Dayle O'Brien

13 Ten Tips for Using Appreciative Inquiry for Community Planning
Using AI to develop new kinds of conversations, leading to visions for the future, bridges being built across diverse populations, and innovative plans, policies and programs
Diana Whitney & Amanda Trosten-Bloom

17 Sustainable Cleveland 2019
Building an Economic Engine to Empower a Green City on a Blue Lake
Recognizing the need to embrace innovation and intentionally shift the city's focus towards a more resilient and sustainable economy
Andrew Watterson

22 Youth Voices Revitalizing the Memphis Community
Steps, Impact and Keys to Success
Imagine Memphis has been planting seeds of transformation Memphis, Tennessee since 2007
Mary Jo Greil and Diane R. Spence

31 Transforming Local Dutch Government
Implementing the Power of Appreciative Inquiry in the Amsterdam East District
Co-creating a vision for Amsterdam East with residents and businesses to implement an ambition of mutual cooperation and self-reliance
Sigrid Winkel, Ralph Weickel

The Promise of Appreciative Cities

Compelling the Whole to Act

Inside this issue

38 **Engagement and Beyond**
Tackling Tough Infrastructure Issues with Appreciative Inquiry
Challenges, key choices and short- and long-term outcomes in three tactical projects in Denver, Colorado
Barbara Lewis, Amanda Trosten-Bloom and Lynn Pollard

49 **Focus on Longmont**
On Becoming an Appreciative City
Since 2006, Longmont Colorado has become an appreciative city through extensive and detailed use of AI in key areas
Karen Roney

62 **Issue Conclusions**
At the core of great cities are the people who form their communities, and connecting and engaging communities make cities vibrant
Barbara Lewis and Karen Roney

65 **Appreciative Inquiry Research Notes**
A personal appreciation of Caravaggio, and with AI as the research framework
Jan Reed and Neena Verma

71 **Appreciative Inquiry Resources**
Resources for practitioners wishing to explore further the idea of appreciative cities
Matthew R. Moehle, Roopa Nandi and Hardik Shah

76 **About the February 2014 Issue**
Adaptable Leadership: A Strengths-based Approach to Challenging Environments and Difficult Choices
Guest Editors: Wendy Campbell and Anne Radford

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Appreciating People(AP) works with people, communities, businesses, charities and organisations to help them get the best out of themselves and make positive change happen
Tim Slack and Suzanne Quinney, co-directors

AI Practitioner Volume 15 Number 4 ISBN 978-1-907549-17-5 dx.doi.org/10.12781/978-1-907549-17-5-1 November 2013

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The Promise of Appreciative Cities

Compelling the Whole to Act

What promise does an appreciative city hold? How is AI achieving change agendas in cities around the world? This edition of AI Practitioner looks at how cities, their governments and communities have been using AI over many years as well as recent developments in collaborative governance. There are detailed examples, tips and lessons learned about transforming community engagement and attitudes toward public service as well as what it takes to be an appreciative city.

This edition of AI Practitioner takes you on a journey to several cities to explore how Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is achieving a wide variety of change agendas. Some stories are of internal applications within city government; others are best-in-class examples of community engagement and collaborative governance. One editor, Karen Roney, works within city government as Director of Community Services in Longmont, Colorado while the other, Barbara Lewis, works as a consultant in community engagement and organizational development.

Building sustainability

We begin with practical insights for successful AI processes in communities. In "Ten Tips for Community Planning", Amanda Trosten-Bloom and Diana Whitney share their key findings from AI research into the root causes of success in three community-based AI processes. We then turn to stories from five cities in which AI has been used for very different purposes. In "Sustainable Cleveland 2019: Building an Economic Engine to Empower a Green City on a Blue Lake", Andrew Watterson tells the story of the large and bold three-day AI Summit to transform Cleveland into a sustainable city. The Summit launched a ten-year initiative, Sustainable Cleveland 2019, which continues to serve as an incubator for new, sustainable businesses in the Cleveland area. Unsurprisingly, Sustainable Cleveland 2019 is also an exemplary story on how to sustain AI momentum and action with annual summits, an action plan for engagement and a robust process for evaluation.

Imagining transformation

From Cleveland, we move to best-in-class intergenerational engagement in Memphis, Tennessee. Launched by authors Mary Jo Greil and Diane Spence,

Bliss Browne, Maser Community Builder

Imagine Memphis is a community-led initiative within the city, focused on transforming Memphis by engaging and empowering the youth of the city. We get a glimpse of how the Imagine process has transformed lives and created positive relationships in the greater Memphis area. In a video interview, Bliss Browne reflects on her insights on communities and her belief that divisions among people are socially constructed; in her view, the Imagine process that she originated unleashes the inherent unity within humankind. To watch the YouTube video, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tExQ58fk7GA.

Embracing collaborative governance

The theme of community building takes on a new twist in Amsterdam East in the Netherlands, where AI is helping government and citizens create a new administration following consolidation of fourteen districts into seven in 2010. Amsterdam East, one of the new consolidated districts, is just beginning to use AI to build a city that embraces collaborative governance. Authors Sigrid Winkel and Ralph Weickel share how AI is connecting city and community as partners. The stories in Memphis in the United States and Amsterdam East in the Netherlands both underscore the importance of trust in fueling positive change: AI builds a foundation of trust that connects people so that the seemingly impossible becomes possible.

A map of the resources of Amsterdam East. To read more about the project, go to page 31

Addressing infrastructure issues

While AI in cities is often associated with these visionary, large-scale efforts, what of the tactical issues that comprise most of what cities do for their residents and businesses? "Engagement and Beyond: Tackling Tough Infrastructure Issues with Appreciative Inquiry" compares three AI processes in Denver, Colorado and the inherent flexibility of the 4D process in different project settings. Barbara Lewis, Amanda Trosten-Bloom and Lynn Pollard relate how one city has successfully used AI to address the hard, tactical issues of budget challenges, infrastructure demands and departmental mergers.

Setting the direction

In the final article, Karen Roney explores how AI serves the different roles cities assume in society, as service providers, conveners and facilitators. While Longmont began using AI to set direction in a large, highly engaging, citywide strategic plan, the city government is now weaving AI and AI-based practices into everything from policing to branding. Longmont has discovered that AI energizes city employees and creates empathetic relationships between public servants and those they serve. AI is not an event or a process, but a way of governing. Longmont, Colorado, a community of nearly 90,000, is on the path to becoming an appreciative city.

Addressing tactical issues in Denver. To read more, go to page 38

What is an appreciative city? How does the promise of AI provide a container for people to engage authentically in their government? Editors Barbara Lewis and Karen Roney were the original champions for AI in Longmont. As program chair for the 2004 International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) annual conference, Barbara focused the conference on Appreciative Inquiry, with keynote

Appreciating Longmont's commitment.
Read more on page 49

speeches by Diana Whitney and Bliss Browne. Impressed by the message that AI holds a new promise for how cities engage with their communities, Karen attended the conference and returned home convinced that AI was the approach the city needed to use for its upcoming citywide strategic plan. The rest, as they say, is history: in 2006, IAP2 awarded Longmont the Core Values Project of the Year Award for "Focus on Longmont: Share your vision, create our legacy".

Rebuilding Longmont : A deeper commitment

Longmont's experience of AI back in 2004 was significant, transforming community engagement and attitudes toward public service in the city. Perhaps the most compelling theme of the citywide plan was "One Giant Front Porch." At the time of writing, this theme has taken on new, deeper meaning as Longmont is just beginning to rebuild after a flood of epic proportions in September, 2013. As news reports consistently relate how Longmont residents are coming to each other's rescue, the community's positive attitude – its "One Giant Front Porch" – is still alive and well.

Barbara Lewis and Karen Roney
November 2013

Back to Table of Contents

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The Promise of Appreciative Cities: Conclusions

Compelling the Whole to Act

At the core of great cities are the people who live, work and play there. Cities are made up of communities. In appreciative cities, these communities are connected and engaged, making them great places to live, vibrant and sustainable.

People are often drawn to city government work – whether elected or appointed – because they want to solve problems and make their communities great places to live, work and visit. They want to get something done. They want to help people. They want to make a difference.

When you think about great cities, you might think about cities that offer accessible public transportation; vibrant arts and cultural activities; beautiful parks and open spaces; safe neighborhoods; thriving businesses; strong infrastructure; clean energy, air and plentiful, quality water resources. But at the core of what makes cities great are the people. They are the city. And in order for cities to achieve these great things and remain vibrant and sustainable, they must be successful in engaging residents and stakeholders who represent all voices, perspectives and systems in the community.

Creating connected communities

The cities we have highlighted in this issue have embraced the notion that, given the opportunity, people will take responsibility for themselves and their community. And they have discovered that AI creates a radical container for meaningful and authentic engagement, which yields tangible results and creates connected communities. These cities are discovering the promise of being an appreciative city. Through AI and AI-based practices, these cities have discovered that:

... the people who are part of the community are best suited to do the work of cities. The challenges facing cities today are complex and difficult to solve. Traditional government service delivery, with the city as the service provider and the resident as the customer, just isn't effective in addressing the quality of life issues facing

G'night Bike event in Longmont: a sustainable city

cities today. Appreciative cities have discovered ways to truly engage residents as partners in facing complex community issues so that they are more likely to take responsibility for sustaining solutions to those same issues.

... the value of a different approach to problem-solving. Governments are in the problem-solving business and the typical approach for governments is to start with a gap analysis – what the problem is. Cities can be successful in addressing a particular problem this way, but there is no overarching strategic path. However soon, there will just be another problem to take its place. By using AI, cities can create the same gap analysis, but it looks different. It looks broader, it provides an opportunity to more deeply explore root causes of success, and it illustrates that, rather than having just one solution to a single problem, there may be several paths to a desired outcome that might not yet have been imagined. Because AI harnesses creativity and energy, people want to be part of the solution.

... sustainable change requires collaborative governance. Government officials are called upon to address increasingly complex issues to ensure the future viability of their cities. The government cannot, nor can any one sector alone, solve problems such as poverty, economic recovery or preserving the natural environment. But it can convene and engage all sectors of the community to achieve collectively what it is difficult to achieve individually. Appreciative cities have discovered how to engage the whole community – residents, neighborhoods, organizations, businesses, education and faith communities – in creating a shared vision for their future and collective action for moving forward. AI leads cities onto a sustainable path, not only because the whole system is engaged in its creation and implementation, but also because this collective action can transcend changes in elected leadership.

Shopping at the Javastraat market in Amsterdam East: engaged, connected citizens

... building trust and relationships between people and among groups is foundational to the interdependent work of cities. And the actions and behavior of people influence how well systems interface with each other to accomplish the important work of cities; how things get done. Trust fuels positive interaction and systemic change. But building trust takes time; it is earned over time and through experience in working with others. Appreciative cities are transforming the way they engage with people, with communities and with all stakeholders. Through AI, they are creating opportunities for people to come together and to connect with each other in authentic, meaningful ways. They are paying attention to how things get done, not just what needs to be done. And they are taking the time to create the container in which trust can grow and strengthen.

What's next in creating an appreciative city?

In this issue, we have been inspired by cities that have utilized AI and AI-based approaches for visionary, long-range and tactical planning; for community involvement/engagement; for co-creating new governance models; and for carrying out various roles of government. These cities are breaking the mold of long-held government traditions and structures, and are influencing new ways of governance.

The 2009 Cleveland Summit: breaking the mold for city governance

And for cities to thrive now and in the future, in the face of increasingly complex issues and the need for interdependent solutions, a new way of governance is critically important.

The promise of AI: Collaborative governance

We believe the next step on this journey toward becoming an appreciative city is for cities to consider AI as a way of governance rather than a process or event: to integrate AI-based practices within its systems of government – inside and out. We have seen how AI yields tangible results, such as specifications for designing new enterprise resource planning systems, while at the same time creating a culture of shared responsibility, accountability and trust among the people responsible for successfully implementing, building and sustaining city services and infrastructure.

Political theorist Benjamin Barber[1] (TED Global Talks) suggests that we live in a "21st-century world of interdependence", yet we still operate within the same archaic forms of governance established hundreds of years ago, making it difficult for political institutions to solve the complex problems of people today. However, he suggests that cities hold the promise for our future. Cities, he says, are political institutions that can be a model for the world if they have mayors that are problem-solvers and can get things done: they are closely connected to the people and communities they serve and have a greater likelihood of establishing and maintaining trust with the people they serve.

That is the promise of appreciative cities ...

1 http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_barber_why_mayors_should_rule_the_world.html

More from AI Practitioner on Appreciative Governance

February 2013: 'Experiments with Appreciative Governance'
Author Yogesh Verma shares his experience as a government functionary in India infusing AI philosophy into deficit-based enforcement, investigation and vigilance work, with intentionally searching for "what works".

May 2012: 'The Appreciative Governance Summit: Designing the Social Architecture of Engagement, Innovation and Productivity'
Bernard Mohr and Neil Samuels describe how the AG Summit engages stakeholders in designing a more distributed and strengths-based governance architecture.

November 2011: Appreciative Governance (AG)
In this issue, entirely devoted to AG, editors Sallie Lee, Bernard J. Mohr and Cheri Torres share the results of an on-going inquiry into principles and practices of AG.

Back to Table of Contents

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About the February 2014 Issue

Adaptable Leadership: A Strengths-based Approach to Challenging Environments and Difficult Choices

This issue shows an emergence of remarkable collaboration and inspired leadership against the backdrop of turbulent financial markets, possible company closure and increased regulatory pressure. The articles map the new theoretical and conceptual territory of adaptable leadership as well as show the impact on motivation, performance and business results.

Successful leaders demonstrate the resilience to bounce back from the knocks that changes in their environment deliver and they have the adaptability to make the best of these changes. They also encourage this adaptability in their people. This adaptability is built on:

- The courage to look at their current challenges with open eyes and co-develop a way forward that is best for all their stakeholders.
- Solid core values that keep all their decision-making honest and fair.
- The humility to give credit where credit is due.

We wanted to find out more about how leaders created the pace and dynamism to work through the challenges and where they used a strengths-based approach with their existing frameworks and approaches to move forward again.

For the February 2014 issue, we have defined two streams of articles:

- Mapping the new territory of adaptable leadership - the theoretical and conceptual
- Impact of adaptable leadership on motivation, performance and business results.

The articles show an emergence of true collaboration and inspired leadership in very varied situations, including: maintaining morale and performance with a company closure pending and sustaining company results through turbulent financial markets.

Leading topics in AI Practitioner 2014

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February 2014
Adaptable Leadership
A Strengths-based Approach to Challenging Environments and Difficult Choices
Editors: Wendy Campbell and Anne Radford

May 2014
The Long-Term Impact of Appreciative Inquiry at Colleges and Universities
Editors: Dr. Lane A. Glenn, Dr. Kelly Saretsky and Dr. Nancy E. Stetson

August 2014
Research as Practice: Illustrations from Appreciative Inquiry
Taos Institute Ph.D. dissertations
Editors: Kristin Bodiford and Celiane Camargo-Borges

November 2014
Spirituality and Appreciative Inquiry
Editors: Duane R. Bidwell and Katherine Rand

There is still time to take out your subscription for 2013 and collect your February, May, August and November issues.

About the sponsor of this issue

Appreciating People – inspiring strength based organisations

Appreciating People(AP) works with people, communities, businesses, charities and organisations to help them get the best out of themselves and make positive change happen. We work regionally, nationally and internationally from Liverpool, UK.

Our central practice is the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy, and we are recognised as one of the leading AI-based consultants in the country. Jane Magruder Watkins, one of AI's founders, describes us as 'taking AI to places no one else has!'

We make positive change happen in organisations, communities, businesses, charities and individuals. We use a variety of strengths-based approaches, and provide a range of AI training courses and workshops, plus appreciative conversation workshops and 'how to journal' sessions. Recent work has included introducing AI into health care in prisons, working with dementia, a community project (Imagine Anfield Flourishing) and a international learning exchange project between Prague and Turin.

Developments are now taking place to establish a centre for Appreciative Inquiry at Salford University, UK with the intention of developing a range of AI training programmes.

As part of our commitment to AI training we have developed a range of AI resources. These are: *AI essentials – A Practical Guide to Appreciative Inquiry*; and our appreciative journaling workbook *Food for Thought*. Both can be purchased from our website. In November 2013 our latest publication, *Creating Great Conversations: Practical Advice for Better Appreciative Conversations,* will be available.

For more information, have a look at our website, www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk

We are honoured to sponsor the November 2013 issue of *AI Practitioner.*

If you would like to sponsor a future edition of AI Practitioner please contact Anne Radford at editor@aipractitioner.com

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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.

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