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Dear Reader,

"Business as an agent of world benefit — yeah, right...!" was the reaction of a colleague when I mentioned to him I just came from Cleveland, where Case Western Reserve University had organized the Global Forum 2009 of BAWB — Business as an Agent for World Benefit.

Do you want to hear more? Well, you may not hear, but you can read about it in this month's issue!

Enjoy and be inspired!

Isabel Rimanoczy
Editor

Quote of the Month

***"Some dream to escape reality.
Others dream of changing reality forever."***

Sōichirō Honda
Engineer & Industrialist
(1906-1990)

Global Forum 2009

Watch Isabel Rimanoczy's presentation at Global Forum 2009. Her topic: "Masters in Sustainable Business Administration: The What and How of Developing a New Generation of Leaders" Click the icon to watch:



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Issue 107

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Business as an Agent of World Benefit

by Isabel Rimanoczy

In June 2009 the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, hosted the second Global Forum for Business as an Agent of World Benefit, in an effort supported by the United Nations Global Compact, the Academy of Management and the Global Forum consortium – with the [Fetzer Institute](#), the [Federation of Industries of the States of Parana](#) (Brazil) and [Fairmount Minerals](#).

The conference brought together nearly 600 leaders in the areas of sustainability, business, policy, academia and design. The theme of the summit was "*Manage by designing in an era of massive innovation*", calling on participants to reflect on the opportunities to design the change the planet needs using innovative thinking. David Cooperrider, co-developer of Appreciative Inquiry, was one of the masterminds behind this exceptional event that was convened to inspire an audience eager to act to meet today's pressing social and environmental needs.

The concept

The concept of this forum was to focus over three days on humanity's ability to create positive change in the world through innovative thinking and design concepts. For that purpose, the summit itself took the shape of a creative setting, where state-of-the-art presentations by top leaders were alternated with intense small group dialogues designed to facilitate planning and concrete action steps.

Challenging perspectives

The summit opened with a provocative presentation by entrepreneur **Gunter Pauli**, founder of Zero Emissions Research Initiative. He began by sharing a hard lesson learned a few years ago when he led the innovative process to clean up European rivers using biodegradable products. Only later did he realize that by so doing he was contributing to the extinction of the Indonesian Orangutan. The reason? Lack of systemic thinking. Biodegradable cleaning products are based on palm oil, and the demand for palm oil led Indonesian farmers to clear the rainforest in order to increase plantations of palm trees. And so the orangutan lost his home.

"The wisdom of the past is not the wisdom of today," he warned. "We need to stop thinking of doing no harm: we need to start finding ways to restore nature. We need to stop thinking how to manufacture non-contaminating batteries: we have to focus on creating innovative energy sources that don't use batteries at all! The USA alone spends US\$ 1 trillion yearly to dispose of waste. This is twice as much as what goes into Obama's recovery plan," he observed. "We need to build new business models that take a positive approach and unleash the dormant creativity in all of us." And he cited the example of Toyota, which is developing a car that actually purifies the air, and of the 2700 Japanese corporations that are already in the zero waste-zero emission program.

Another recent project he led through his foundation promotes multi cropping in Colombia^[1], where farmers used only to produce coffee in a procedure resulting in a large waste of the husks. The program at the ZERI model farm known as La Mixoca reduced coffee waste by using it to grow shiitake mushrooms, at the same time as they incorporated six different herbal and caffeine-free

teas, dehydrated bananas and bamboo products^[2].

Bio roofs

Bill McDonough, an internationally renowned designer and recipient of numerous awards for his environmentally breakthrough designs, shared some troubling facts, together with some inspirational news. According to recent data, there is 46 times more plastic than plankton in the Pacific current. The oceans are responsible for absorbing 48% of the CO₂ in the atmosphere, however the huge volume they are absorbing is modifying and rapidly decreasing the acidity of the water. The pH has to be in the range of 8.8 to 8.2. Today the measurements indicate we are at 8.06 units. At 7.9 the coral reefs dissolve, and this is the base of the food chain, he noted. We need to change our mindset, moving from not destroying the environment to saving it; and he added that being less bad is very different from being good. He gave the example of a car going slower in the wrong direction: this slower pace will not help the driver to arrive at the destination — unless the slowing down is used to turn the car around and to begin going into the other direction. Efficiency is not enough, he insisted, because it just takes us to zero. We need to rebuild what human behaviors have damaged, mostly unknowingly, he indicated, since only a third of the chemicals used in the world today have been actually tested.

As an example of positive initiatives, he cited the redesign of a Ford plant in Chicago. The redesign was budgeted at US\$48 million, while it cost only US\$13 million, which is an interesting fact to correct the myth that being "green" is more costly. A construction that was just blacktop, concrete and steel was converted into a field of green where now Canadian geese, mallard ducks and killdeer nest and raise offspring. Sustainability experts say the Ford Rouge Center project inspired other businesses and organizations around the world to pursue similar projects. Moreover, in urban areas families are transforming their roofs into farmland, as it is the case in China, where rice and other crops are now grown.^[3] Another innovative solution was developed by US furniture manufacturer Herman Miller. As they redesigned their plant to become "green", they attracted a colony of wasps. After some brainstorming they decided to invite in bees installing some beehives, and the bees took care of the wasps. The by-product? The furniture manufacturer bottles the honey and offers it as a gift to plant visitors and customers, sending at the same time a message of environmentally friendly behaviors and creativity!

A crowded interconnected unsustainable society

These were the words used by **Jeffrey Sachs**, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, special Advisor to the UN Secretary General, who participated in the creation of the Millennium Development Goals, the internationally established goals to reduce extreme poverty, disease and hunger by 2015. In midst of a sequence of encouraging and hopeful presentations about initiatives to develop peace, fight illiteracy and transform the contents of business schools, his words fell like an ice-cold shower. "Yes, we may be the first generation to end poverty...but we may also be the last generation with a viable planet," he admonished a rapt and silent audience. "We are at a crossroads — but we barely are conscious we have this choice. Just think that one unit of beef requires 10 units of land, 10 of water and 10 of feed." I couldn't help thinking of my mother-in-law who lived through the Depression of 1929, and raised her family growing their food on a half-acre lot, and only had meat on rare occasions.

Ask Nature

One of the most inspiring presentations was led by **Janine Benyus** a biologist, innovation consultant, and author of six books, including her latest — [***Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature***](#). With slides and stories she described what "biomimicry" is: an emerging discipline that seeks sustainable solutions by emulating nature's designs and processes. This can be for example solar cells that mimic leaves, agriculture that models a prairie, businesses that run like redwood forests. She described her role as biologist at the design table in corporations, where R&D professionals and engineers ask her for advice — and she brings models inspired in designs tested over 3.8 billion years: the designs of nature and its organisms. "We can learn from, and emulate, the nature that surrounds us, and develop products, processes and policies that create conditions conducive to life."

"Just as we are beginning to recognize all there is to learn from the natural world, our models are starting to blink out — not just a few scattered organisms, but entire ecosystems. A new survey by the National Biological Service found that one-half of all native ecosystems in the United States are degraded to the point of endangerment. How can we live on this home planet without destroying it?" She gave examples of a new joining system that replaces screws, bolts, glue, flanges and nails, by studying how blue mussels adhere to surfaces; inspired by a desert beetle that is able to collect water on the bumps of its back and roll it into its mouth, panels were designed that harvest water; analyzing how termite mounds manage heat and cold through vents and tunnels, in Zimbabwe a building was developed that uses a similar system; mimicking the lotus leaf, a self-cleaning design for glass and textiles was developed.

Janine also created an interactive website called Ask Nature, where much of her collected knowledge is shared with the world (www.asknature.org)^[4]

Her closing words were a suggestion that sounded more like a personal request: "There is no time to be shy. Be bold, act now."

What do we do with all this?

Throughout the summit, participants interacted in learning dyads, small groups and task forces. The design allowed us time to conduct conversations, to write in our journals, facilitated by guiding questions, and to develop step by step a prototype of a solution or a dream project. The last day, the participants' teams presented their creations, which included projects such as crafting a Declaration of Interdependence that would be signed by the states of the world; developing a Nobel-like award for sustainable businesses; launching a process to brainstorm the concept of a firm inviting students, faculty and administrators in colleges; a reflective bus where people would ride for a short period with the goal of having a meaningful conversation and encounter with one other person. The forum launched a virtual platform (bawbglobalforum.ning.com) open to all participants and visitors, where information about the forum and the projects can be uploaded, shared and followed up.

I came away with my mind in a mixture of concern, urgency and determination. The challenge is huge, and the task daunting. But as **Sandra Waddock** from Boston College said: If not us, who? If not now, when?



A poem to share

Starting the last day, I was invited to share a poem I had written the night before,
as I was trying to process all those intense messages and experiences.
I am sharing it with you here.

67 Hours

<i>I meet a friend</i>	<i>But then, at once</i>
<i>I make a friend</i>	<i>I think of home</i>
<i>I hear what I should know</i>	<i>Where people just ignore</i>
<i>It's CO₂</i>	<i>They drink their latte</i>
<i>It's poverty</i>	<i>And drive to work</i>
<i>I know what I should fear</i>	<i>And watch the news on sport</i>
<i>It's 2012</i>	<i>They don't recycle</i>
<i>We've got no time</i>	<i>And have two vans</i>
<i>It's raining in my heart</i>	<i>And worry about the gas.</i>
<i>Yet everyone</i>	<i>So I look back</i>
<i>Is working so hard</i>	<i>The past two days</i>
<i>I think it can be done</i>	<i>And sense the privilege</i>
<i>Chick works for peace</i>	<i>We've heard and seen</i>
<i>Tom works for love</i>	<i>It's time to go</i>
<i>Ron thinks that there is hope</i>	<i>Ambassadors, through those doors.</i>
<i>We're all in this</i>	<i>We've gotta run, we've gotta act now</i>
<i>And holding hands</i>	<i>Speak up, be bold. Stand up</i>
<i>The chain seems to expand</i>	<i>There is no time, just fear and hope</i>
	<i>And it's raining in my heart.</i>

IR -Cleveland, June 5th, 2009

[1] http://www.zeri.org/case_studies_bamboo.htm

[2] Also see *Upsizing: The Road to Zero Emissions, More Jobs, More Income, and No Pollution* by [Gunter Pauli](#)

[3] http://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=28471

[4] Watch the You Tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n77BfxnVlyc>

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"Sustainability: Doing Well by Doing Good" Workshop

* Identify earning and savings opportunities * Help the Planet * Develop your people

Are you struggling to find creative ways to continue doing business while cutting costs and maximizing available resources? Did you already cut your training and development budgets, although you know how important it is to invest in learning to stay competitive? Are you sensitive to corporate environmental responsibility yet aware that there are other priorities on the table? If you recognize yourself in these dilemmas, we have a new perspective for you to consider. LIM has developed a way to identify low-hanging savings opportunities that can improve the bottom line, at the same time you can help the Planet and develop your people.

It is a workshop called "Sustainability: Doing Well by Doing Good". To learn more click here: [Sustainability: Doing Well by Doing Good](#)

Upcoming LIM-Related Events

Be sure to check out and register for upcoming LIM events.
For more information, go to <http://www.limglobal.net/events.html>.

If you want more triggers for reflection, visit <http://isabelrimanoczy.blogspot.com>



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