

Oh what a night!

Thursday 5 September saw VIPS flocking to GGI's Annual Lecture in Westminster, London. The event also marked the launch of our Festival of Governance. Following a spectacular evening that was enjoyed by all who attended, Festival Director, Jaco Marais, reflects on an entertaining and inspiring event.



Every year, for the past five years, GGI brings together leaders of organisations and through a range of events and activities, encourages them to join forces with the GGI community to work towards a creation of a better fairer world for all.

The GGI Annual Lecture is the first in a series of events that make up the Festival of Governance. This year's theme, "*Good governance because it's personal*" resonated with our 170-strong audience, who in turn, influence the lives of thousands in their roles in local government, the health and social care, charity, arts and culture, sports and education sectors.

But, what is personal?

The answer is multi-dimensional and a little complex, however through simple storytelling we can offer insight into human nature, our personalities and how we interact with society as a whole.

Opening the celebration Soprano Alison Langer transported us to a magical place of sound and imagination with her rendition of *O Mio Bambino Caro*. Then GGI Strategy Director, Donal Sutton presented an overview of GGI's efforts during the past year as well as offering a view to the future.





The scene was then set for Andrew Corbett-Nolan's colourful retelling of the myth of Narcissus and Echo – the premise being that it's human nature to seek out the best, the most beautiful and ultimately what our heart desires most. Despite a creative presentation which included references to King Ludwig of Bavaria, (the other Narcissus) as a participant on the X Factor, and having a profile on various social media platforms such as Gridnr, Facebook, Twitter and GoFundMe, Andrew told the romantic story of a man who did all that he could to make his dreams come true.

The moral of the story however is that life can be likened to an echo – in this instance Narcissist's echo goes unheard and turns to stone. The analogy can be broken down into the fact that what we put out into the world, we receive back, and that which we see – and often dislike in others – is, at the same time, reflected in our own personalities. Then there is also the issue of growing up and the accompanying need and expectation to assume responsibility. If we don't accept this and take it onboard, we run the risk of getting stuck in our own development and missing making stronger connections with the world we inhabit.

Continuing with order of proceedings, Lord Kamlesh Patel of Bradford, shared with us his journey of choosing to connect with those who could help him change the lives of others, and his passion for his calling in social work. A memorable quote was, "To connect with people we should first be able to put ourselves in their shoes to understand where they are coming from and what exactly their needs and priorities are."

Interestingly, Narcissus and King Ludwig of Bavaria both displayed a lack of connection with the people around them. Rather they were consumed by the concepts of superficial beauty and self-gratification which ultimately lead them to their lonely ends.

Our individual and organisational wealth and wellbeing depends on the strength of our connections allowing us to grow into better, more mature individuals with even greater capacity to engage with ourselves and the people we care for.

What is personal; is what we choose to connect to.

Continuing with the medium of storytelling, it is important to note that stories, especially those of the personal nature need to be told in safe spaces, free of shame.

This idea is upheld by the work of the recipient of the annual GGI Governance Prize, England's National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care, Dame Fiona Caldicott. Presented with the award by Baroness Glenys Thornton, GGI recognised Dame Fiona for her leadership of the Caldicott Report and her ongoing quest to protect patients' privacy by ensuring the appointment of a Caldicott Data Guardian in every NHS Trust in the UK.



Linking in with the theme, Dame Fiona's work allows us to be ourselves within boundaries of trust. To have privacy is to have power over our own narrative; it is where we have the space to be truthful to ourselves. The quality of the data on medical record improves when individuals can be guaranteed that the information is not personally identifiable.

The presentations culminated with a participatory experience where I suggested that while we can learn from personal and mythological stories, we also have the power to create our own story. You see, when 170 people come together to share stories, we create a culture. In this case, a culture of good governance and personal responsibility.

In his book *Sapiens, A brief history of human kind*, Yuval Hurari, argues that people cooperating in groups of between 140 and 170 have the power to drive change through storytelling, without shame or the creation of competing factions. Inspired by this concept, we closed the Annual Lecture by launching the hashtag [#ichoose](#). A cultural experiment that aims to bring about immediate change within an already established culture, we encourage everyone to get involved in our Festival of Governance ([#FestofGov](#)). One way associate yourself would be to let us know on social media what exactly it is that you would like to change, and to use the [#ichoose](#) hashtag. To learn more about the intriguing world of good governance and the 2030 Commission, please see the 2019 Festival Review. If you would like to receive a digital copy please email us on events@good-governance.org.uk.