

About TRIZ Future Conference 2006 and ETRIA's future

Gaetano Cascini, president

Dear ETRIA members, TFC participants, TRIZ friends,

I'm so excited to start this experience as ETRIA president that I miss the words to write this communication with a formal style.

I just would like to thank once more the Executive Board for supporting my candidature and all the members for their vote, trust, friendship demonstrated by a number of greeting messages.

In the following you will find a short report on the TRIZ Future Conference 2006, including a summary of what was discussed during the Annual Members meeting, and a list of actions I would like to promote in our next future. In order to properly focus those actions, a short questionnaire is added at the end. Please, fill it and sent it back to cascini@etría.net: sharing the goals is the first necessary step to achieve them!!

TFC 2006

This year the conference was organized in Kortrijk, Belgium (a lively city famous for design and innovation activities) by Simon Dewulf (CREAX) as hosting ETRIA member, Prof. Joost Duflou (University of Leuven) as scientific host, Lode De Geyter (Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen) as local organizer host.

About 120 participants from 21 countries spent together 3 days attending almost 40 oral presentations among the 18 scientific and 31 practitioner papers published on the proceedings. Here a first relevant novelty of the 2006 edition, with a double track, one dedicated to practitioner experiences and new developments, the other with a scientific target.

The program was enriched by enjoyable social events, as usual very useful for establishing/strengthening collaborations, by interesting keynote speeches and tutorial sessions and by a relevant novelty: the opportunity to visit one of the following companies:

- Barco: visualization products for a variety of professional markets;
- Picanol: high-tech weaving machines;
- Bekaert: advanced metal transformation and advanced materials and coatings;
- Balta: group of complementary companies that offers total solutions for interior decoration, from area rugs to wallpaper;
- Proferro: casting, processing and assembling engineered casting solutions in grey lamellar and nodular cast iron.

According to the tradition of the last 3 years, a tutorial session started the conference with Valery Kraev holding the "advanced" session on ARIZ and Jack Hipple introducing TRIZ to beginners. Both the tutorials attracted many participants, despite the preliminary "logistic troubles".

Among the keynote speakers, Aleksey Pinyayev from Procter and Gamble presented his vision about the evolution of innovation principles, from a list of technical, psychological, behavioural recommendations (Edison, Osborn, etc...) to structured principles. From the controversial Contradiction Matrix, to the System of Operators by Boris Zlotin and Alla Zusman,

and to the Physical Contradiction Resolution Groups by Simon Litvin, Alex pointed out the necessity to define the function of a principle before looking for the most suitable one. He proposes Functional Clues and Principles as Functional Resources as a means to simplify the learning process and to be more effective while choosing the right principle to apply. The second keynote was Prof. Stephen Lu, from the University of Southern California, who started his presentation highlighting that many new innovation paradigms are emerging, but technological innovation is still a “black art” and claiming that this is due to the lack of sciences of technological innovation. In order to be accepted as a methodology for supporting innovative engineering design, TRIZ needs a formal scientific foundation so that it can be rigorously developed. In order to formulate the scientific proof of TRIZ potentialities, Prof. Lu made an interesting parallel survey of TRIZ, Activity Theory and Axiomatic Design. In a simultaneous session of the 19th Quality Conference of the Flemish Quality Management Center, a well known friend from the North-American TRIZ community was holding his keynote: the president of the Altshuler Institute Larry Smith. Larry’s speech was dedicated to the integration of TRIZ within a strategic quality management. The last TFC keynote was held by Geert Tanghe & Yves Carton, who presented their experience in Bombardier Group about “HTE”, the “high speed train for Europe”, with a successful integration of DFSS and TRIZ.

As usual, this comprehensive program has required tremendous efforts by the organizers and a special thank must be recognized to the colleagues and collaborators of Simon, Joost and Lode for their enthusiasm and efficiency: Nele Dekeyser, Joris D'Hondt, Tom Devoldere, Frederik D'Hulster, Cies Vanneste, Hilde Van Maele. A special mention is also dedicated to the Kortrijk municipality and to the helpful support by Jean de Bethune and Helen Allegaert.

The next TRIZ Future Conference

A final note about the next edition of our annual meeting. In 2007 the conference will be co-organized by ETRIA and TRIZ Centrum in Frankfurt from November 6th to November 8th. Further details will appear soon on ETRIA’s web site (www.etria.net).

In order to improve the efficiency of the next TRIZ Future Conferences, several suggestions were provided by the participants to the Members Meeting:

- roundtables for discussions of theoretical and practical topics;
- publication of the abstracts in advance;
- increased time for discussion.

Strengths and sore points

This year was mostly dedicated to provide a higher scientific visibility to TRIZ, in order to promote new opportunities of development and dissemination of the methodology. To achieve this objective, worldwide reference researchers in scientifically established communities of Engineering Design have been contacted and invited to join and constitute TFC2006 scientific committee. As a result the review process has been significantly improved and a careful selection has been performed from the initial list of more than 90 submissions. Nevertheless, the quality level of the contributions can be further raised and one of the main goal of ETRIA for the next years will be the achievement of a stable acceptance of the TRIZ

Future Conference by the scientific community as a reference event for Innovative Product Development methodologies. Denis Cavallucci and Joost Duflou from ETRIA Executive Board will play a major role in this direction.

It is my strong opinion that weaknesses must be highlighted, not hidden (it's a way to find out contradictions, isn't it?). This is why I will dedicate a few words to some "warnings". I'm also confident that our organization has all the means to react and make a step toward ideality.

Several "new faces" attended the conference this year and this is without any doubt a great news for ETRIA and the whole TRIZ community. At the same time we have to register the absence of a number of well known TRIZ masters and experts and their experience was somehow missing during the discussion between the speakers and the audience.

A further negative trend to be noticed is the decreasing percentage of participants from industry (while both academicians and consultants are still increasing).

As described in the following paragraph, a number of initiatives will be promoted by ETRIA according to the discussion held during the Annual Members Meeting, in order to face those warnings.

Global Coordination Group meeting

As reported in the introduction to the Proceedings of the last TFC, cosigned by the past-president Denis Cavallucci and me, ETRIA is approaching a new "S" curve. Improving the quality and the acknowledgement of the annual conference certainly is a way to contribute for a proper dissemination of TRIZ Body of Knowledge and to impact on its acceptability and usability in the industrial world.

Beside, an international association should widen its range of action.

Thus, it is necessary to have a bi-directional communication between the Executive Board and the Members, in order to share goals, decisions, plans.

Together with this communication, each member is receiving ETRIA's by-laws and a questionnaire. Each of you will be requested to specify the level of involvement you would like to have in our community in order to increase our capability to reach, as directly as possible, TRIZ experts, beginners and new communities all over the world.

Consequently the web site will be totally renovated, with new means for communication; Valeri Souchkov is the person in charge from the Executive Board for this task.

Among the other novelties, a wiki-page will be added with the list of academicians involved at any level with TRIZ education, dissemination, research, application resulting from the survey I carried out during the last year.

While a conference is a great opportunity to share experiences between people already hit by the "TRIZ virus" or at least with a certain interest about it, certainly whatever is its quality level, it will never impact those who are not aware of the existence of TRIZ and even more those who have had a negative experience with it.

On the base of this assumption ETRIA will launch in the next future promotional/dissemination activities, like web events, co-organization of introductory seminars together with industrial associations, publication of audio/video material on the website etc. Each member is invited to send suggestions on this topic. Juergen Jantschgi from the Executive Board will coordinate this activity.

Further initiatives: during the 2005 TRIZ Future Conference, the presidents of the three major TRIZ organizations (Altshuller Institute, ETRIA, MATRIZ) agreed on the constitution of a trans-association workgroup for the definition of a shared TRIZ Body of Knowledge. Such a workgroup has been rather inactive, but all agree that it is worth to revive the activity and to reach the goal by the end of 2007.

Questionnaire – How ETRIA should look like in the future?

Name: _____

Are you member of any regional TRIZ association?

YES (please, specify_____)	NO
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Wold you like to act as a Global Coordination Group Member?

YES	NO
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Wold you like to be involved in any of the following ETRIA activities?

Workgroup	Mark
TRIZ Future Conference Organization/Promotion	
Web site update – Preparation of multimedia material	
Organization of regional dissemination events	
Organization of web events	
Definition of TRIZ Body of Knowledge	
Others_____ (please specify)	

TRIZ Future Conference

- What kind of presentation/contribution you are more interested in (please rank the following answers in order of preference, 1 being your first choice; 5 being your last)?

Topic	Rank
New developments of TRIZ methodology	
Integration of TRIZ with other methodologies	
Case studies	
TRIZ education	
Others_____ (please specify)	

- Which is your opinion about the tutorials session

Evaluation	Basic	Advanced
Unuseful		
Unrelevant		
Helpful		
Necessary		
Suggestions about the tutorials.....		

- How to improve the next editions of the TFC: please rank the following from 1 (poor interest) to 5 (it would be great)

Topic	Rank
publish the abstracts of the presentations as soon as their authors subscribe to the conference	
add a slot for discussion at the end of each session	
organize thematic round-tables (please suggest topics_____)	
Others_____ (please specify)	

Beyond the annual Conference

- Do you think that ETRIA should develop further activities apart organizing the TRIZ Future Conference?

YES	NO
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- (if the previous answer is positive) Please rank the following from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

Topic	Rank
organize regional events (possibly together with local organizations)	
promote on-line dissemination events (e.g. 1 hour tutorials + 2 case studies, 45 minutes each)	
publish dissemination material on the web site (video, podcasting)	
establish a prize for PhD(MsD?) theses on TRIZ related topics	
Others_____ (please specify)	