

Think PINC as big ideas come to Holland

By David Rowan | 21 May 2010 | Categories: [David Rowan's Blog](#), [Culture](#)

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For the past 11 years, Peter van Lindonk, a successful Dutch publisher of corporate books and a former circus ringmaster, has been running a one-day ideas-fest in Zeist, Holland. The event -- **PINC**, standing for People, Ideas, Nature, Creativity -- is little known in Britain, far less so than **TED** or **Lift** or **DLD**, even though it has featured speakers ranging from fashion designer Nino Cerruti and Post-It note inventor Art Fry to Ray Kurzweil, who gave the world the flatbed scanner. I was fortunate enough to attend **PINC.11** this Tuesday. And I think it's time the event got on to *Wired* readers' radar.

The format is simple but effective: 16 speakers on a theatre stage for 20 minutes each, plus a few surprise musical interludes. Yes, if that sounds a little like **TED** and its 18-minute talks, that's deliberate -- it's a format that works and allows the audience to share a full, immersive experience without the distraction of break-out sessions. But it's smaller and more intimate than **TED** -- 438 participants this year from 11 countries. So it's easy to strike up a conversation with other delegates as well as the speakers.

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It's the high calibre of the speakers that made this a stand-out event. Van Lindonk, together with Nelleke van Lindonk and Ingrid Bakker, invite [speakers](#) who are passionate about their diverse interests, from neuroscience to book design. Their brief: to "stimulate the audience to consider novel perspectives and rethink their actions". And they did.

Among this year's speakers was Matt Flannery, co-founder of [Kiva](#), who's in [Wired's cover story this month](#). Flannery told an inspiring story of how his microfinance web network has grown to a turnover of \$140 million in five years, and is forecast to reach \$1 billion by 2015 (if you haven't read the *Wired* feature, it's an eye-opener about human goodwill). *Kiva* is expanding into student loans, and increasingly lenders in Africa are making loans to borrowers in the US.

Now that's a flatter world.

There was a demonstration of wireless mains electricity -- first seen at [TED Global](#) last July in Oxford -- by David Schatz of *WiTricity*. It's pretty exciting watching an unplugged-in TV set light up as current passes through the air. If that wasn't circus-like enough, Dan Meyer, winner of the Ig Nobel Prize, explained his obsession with sword-swallowing -- and then proceeded to swallow a number of swords. It took years of practice, he said -- and 13,000 unsuccessful attempts before he made it. Eat your heart out, Malcolm Gladwell.

Other highlights included Ulrich Goetz, a "serious game designer", whose game *Gabarello vs 1.0* is designed to help rehabilitate brain-damaged children in hospital as they re-learn how to walk; Martin Oeggerli, whose astounding "Micronaut" scanning electron-microscope images reveal nature at its tiniest; Cary Fowler, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, which works to preserve a "back up" of every agricultural crop; and Chip Kidd, the highly engaging book designer, novelist and musician who explained his new mantra: "Bitch, I don't know your life." Well, it beat his old mantra: "Live every day of your life as if you're dying of a contagious disease that turns people into flesh-eating zombies when you bite them."

And if these sound like the sorts of ideas you ought to be reading in *Wired* -- well, watch this space...

*David Rowan is the editor of *Wired* magazine.*

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