



What is the Art for Hosting and where did it come from?

The Art of Hosting is an approach to leadership that scales up from the personal to the systemic usage of personal practice, dialogue, facilitation and the co-creation of innovation to address complex challenges.

It is a fusion of some very powerful participatory facilitation tools (Appreciative Inquiry, World Café, Open Space Technology, Circle practice, etc.). Each of these practices is powerful in its own right and has been used for more than 20 years, with international practitioner communities and solid case study examples. Many of these practices came out of the need for radical change. Used together, they are a flexible way to help people lead and help groups to come into connection and deep conversation and action fast. It has come from a group of practitioners who were looking for ways to support people they have been working with to act from the space of connection, meaningfulness and innovation.

How does Participatory Leadership fit into Hosting?

Organisations are becoming more complex, issues are becoming more interdependent, and changes are happening more quickly. Unless people understand how they fit in now, what needs to be changed and how they can support this change to happen, things get stuck in confusion. Be it reorganisation or engaging diverse stakeholder groups: while it can feel like decisions were gone once the meeting is over, change will not happen. Learning to work with people in a way that keeps information and understanding visible and actionable is what hosting is all about.

But what do you mean by “hosting”?

We’ve noticed that plenty of people hold meetings, many people lead meetings, and some people facilitate meetings. But there aren’t many meeting spaces where people step in, step

up and take action together. This demands a different way of working and a different type of container to work in. The word “hosting” indicates a different kind of approach. Being a good host means making sure that people are looked after well, so they can do together their best work and step on the common ground. We’ve all been to meetings that have been well managed, but not well hosted, and often the result is “same old, same old.” Just as “hosting” has a particular connotation, so does the “art”: indicating that this way of working is not a recipe or a set of tools, but an art form in practice. You’ll notice a different language around the Art of Hosting and there’s a reason for that — we want to stimulate our thinking about this way of working in a new way.

Trainings in the Art of Hosting and the Art of Participatory Leadership have been offered all over the world and organized more than 300 times, in many different contexts (corporate, public, non-profit, community based, etc.).

Who has taken part in this way of working?

The Art of Hosting has been used in many types of organisations and communities worldwide. It has been used for small to large-scale projects and is currently being used by the European Commission to initiate participatory leadership practices. It is also being used for dramatically shifting healthcare in Columbus, Ohio; with Native American and First Nation tribes in Canada; and as part of re-establishing peace in Cote d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe. In corporate sector, it has great references in Jyske bank, Swarovski, Erste bank, VIA University College, ARLA Foods and many others.

Multiple functions get value by using this approach: Organisational Development, Operations, Business Development, HR, Project leaders, Communications, CEOs, CFOs and others.

The methods are useful at both personal and professional levels. They help people communicate more effectively, reach understanding more powerfully and turn understanding into inspired action.

What’s unique about the Art of Participatory Leadership training?

Two things. First, the training is offered by a Hosting Team using action learning. The team will facilitate the first day, but from Day 2, participants will be asked to step forward to lead and the Hosting Team will become the clients and the coaches, supporting participants to “learn on the job” and gain hands on, practical skills. We learn together as a community and immediately apply what we learn. Secondly, there is a focus both on hosting the meeting and on harvesting the meeting. Hosting is about how you create group meetings that help people to work well together, innovate from within and make a commitment for action. Harvesting is about making sure that what gets covered in a meeting actually goes somewhere. We’re finding the harvest is one of the most important parts of our work now. After all, why have a meeting if nothing comes out of it? Participants will come away with practical experience in group processes and will be able to focus on specific projects with the support of the participant community. Following the training, all participants have the opportunity to become part of local and international Communities of Practice. If you are simply looking for new tools, this might not be for you, but if you know that the old way of doing things isn’t going to work for much longer, and you’re willing to challenge your thinking and your leadership style, you will be stepping into a community that can help you. This training looks different, and is different from anything else in this field.

How can we make this training really work for us?

Begin by being clear in your intention. If your intention is to demonstrate leadership in your sector, build capacity within your organisation and with stakeholders, support engagement and innovations, and integrate what you find out fast, then we can support you to create the process to make this happen.

- Get the team together. Who from your organisation should be involved? From other agencies? From partnership organisations & groups? From the wider community?
- Decide what initiative will be the framework. Do you want to achieve something in the OD space or within your culture? Do you want to change leadership in your sector? Have you got an upcoming meeting or project that could be the reference site for this work? Do you want to build a platform for community engagement that works?
- Look at how this work fits within your strategic plan and business scope in the foreseeable future — are you willing to commit to creating a community of practice within your team or organisation over the next 2 –3 years?
- Work with us to scope the coaching support you need to achieve your goals and vision.

What if I'm interested, but I can't afford the price?

The Art of Hosting community works on the premise that people should give what they can and ask for what they need. If price is a barrier for you, please talk to us and let's see what we can do together. Alternatively, if you can, please pay a little bit more than the price and support others to come along. If your organisation would like to send a bigger group, consider our team options with discount rate and offer some places to community, youth or your stakeholders or sector partners. Doing something challenging and worthwhile together is one of the best team buildings accomplishments!

For more information about next AOPL training in Croatia visit <http://aoplcroatia.weebly.com/>

