

The Art of Hosting story

What started as an attempt to write the Art of Hosting story for the annual Berkana report by Teresa - in one paragraph - ended as a rich email conversation with almost 20 postings!

"I decided to include more of you as this conversation as it is growing beyond the initial focus ... in order for many voices to be heard and good collective clarity to emerge...."

Toke

"It has been born as a spontaneous collaborative and truly co-creative effort by some of us..."

Toke

"When we shared the stories of our first meeting with the AoH at the Shire (AoH Stewardship Gathering 2005), it seemed that we had all been drawn to and been working with dialogue and other interactive ways since somewhere in the mid 90's. The seeds seemed to have sprouted many places at the same time."

Monica

"I feel there was a lot of work happening that was all in the same pattern - some of that was emerging out of From the Four Directions, some of it out of Days Like This, some of it out of Engage!, some of it out of Pioneers of Change, some of it out of the yearly gatherings at Castle Borl, some of it out of Horizons and Ante's work in Croatia, Zoe and Una's Life works in the UK ... and many other places. It was like a perfect storm it was something happening to all of us - that none of us owned but deeply trusted. It is still happening."

Tim

"What about honoring and naming a legacy, a circle of friends and community of practitioners- warriors of joy and peace? I actually dare suggest that we humbly and tastefully name ourselves as the first ones - ... - in order to create clarity, inspiration and share our learning."

Toke

let name names
what is the shame?
I am happy to be to blame
For the birth
On this earth
of the art of hosting
I ain't boastin'
just toastin'
life and all is gives
all it lives
the friends
the beginnings and the ends
the path and all its bends
Tim

"I do know (from the field of systemic constellation work) that for every individual and for every organisation it is a good thing to know from whom they received - life, or skills, or... - or who were the ones that came before you. So that you can honour them and respect them for what they did, and by receiving in a respectful way you are in the best place to pass it on to others."

Ria

Thank mate

How sweet
are the fruits

of giving
from
our hosted hearts
to life
in us
all
Toke

The Denmark Stream: Monica, Jan Hein, Marianne Knuth, Sven Ole and Toke - network company Days Like This: Toke Moeller, Monica Nissen, Jan Hein, Sven Ole Schmidt

The Borl stream: Monica, Jan Hein, Marianne Knuth, Meg Wheatley, Bob Stilger, Carsten Ohm, Alenka, Toke and Tim Merry

The USA stream: PeerSpirit: Christina Baldwin, Ann Linnea, World Café: Ann Doshier, Juanita Brown, David Isaac, Berkana: Meg, Tenneson Woolf, Bob Stilger and Teresa Posakony

The UK stream: Hara: Maria and Sarah, ...

The Engage stream: Tim, Arjen, Peter Merry
Toke

In other words:

"Some of the networks that gave rise to the Art of Hosting include: Berkana, Days Like This, Hara, Engage, Interchange, Pioneers of Change, PeerSpirit, and The World Café. (alphabetically listed)"
Teresa

"And has been further inspired and nourished by the Shambhala Institute's Authentic Leadership Conferences since 2002."
Toke

"How very beautiful to feel the place and space, energy and heart the AoH emerged from. I too sense the importance of naming the pattern and community that gathered as the first students and stewards! With deep gratitude for the way AoH has been nurtured, co-created, and offered into the world, and for how we keep spinning our learning!"

Teresa

"My first clearly named Art of Hosting training happened in Pema Ling - Santa Cruz where Toke, Jan & I hosted a few days of an early art of hosting with the Pioneers of Change. This was in 1999 as far as I remember.

Tim, Maria and Sarah shared similar stories at the Shire. - That's why I call it fly-eyed (as all networks are) - because the view depends on where you happen to be looking from - and as in all networks - there is no one singular or specific center.

Another pattern we noticed in the stories was the significance of meeting places - where these initiatives were connected and we started to share and inspire each other. From the 4 Directions was such a connector/connecting place - and Borl was another - where people and networks were brought together. Shambhala, the Learning Centres etc. are other places like that.

The richness of experience, heart and knowledge in these connecting networks makes this journey alive - and the AoH seems to be evolving with it."

Monica

"... is my recollection of us at Hazelwood House in December 2000 (From the 4 Directions). Marianne, Tim, Toke, Monika, Christina, Ann Linea, Meg, Bob.

I will never forget the experience of explaining the circle process to our African colleagues from West and Southern Africa, and how energized they became as they remembered being taught circle by

their grandparents, or their father using it at Christmas. In that moment traditional ways were blessed by modern western ways, and I believe we all experienced a deep connection to the circle and conversation as the generic way we humans meet.

And we have this extraordinary photo from that time, with 8 nations represented as we held a large cloth and bounced the world around—a portend of what was to come.

This event was the beginning of From the Four Directions, where we eventually succeeded, through the dedication of everyone at Hazelwood House and beyond, to convene circles in over 30 countries. And learn how to work together as we took this work forward.

Blessings,"

Meg

Note from Monica later: "AoH was named again in Borl 2000 (or was it 2001?) where Toke posted the session in Open Space called: "What could the Art of Hosting also be?" Tim and a few others showed up there. Somehow the naming was quite meaningful."

"I met Toke in October 2001 when he hosted an conference in Rovinj, Croatia - great, life-changing, participatory experience which led me to AoH in Borl 2002 (?) and opened for me the doors to all of you and processes you treasure.

I am learning since then from all of you, through AoHs, emails, conversations, and I do not see the world with the same eyes as before this. I am deeply grateful for your efforts and persistence to open and hold spaces for all of us.

I was a student of AOH and still am.

Hugs and love to all"

Miljenka

"It is such a joy to see the "lineage" of all of this wonderful hosting work. On a very personal note, I might add the loving time David and I spent with Monika and Toke on the coast of Nova Scotia (was it after the first year Toke and you came to Shambhala, 2002??), where together we birthed the hosting chapter of the book on the World Cafe, and played the flow game about the future of our lives.

It was such a stroke of "luck" when David and I somehow felt that it was important to bring more international voices into Shambhala early on and suggested that Toke and Marianne would be a great team to lead the Strategic Conversation module thread we'd begun there with Michael and the Chender family, from our early conversations about it in our kitchen with Michael (recommended to Michael by Meg, I might add--amazing the weaving). And then to see this whole movement blossoming... the World Cafe, AoH, Berkana, Shambhala... with so many added voices and hearts.... what greater love can a child of the 60's feel!!

And our greatest hope over these years has been that "conversation as a co-evolutionary force" will come into greater conscious awareness across the globe... and our AoH community is a great vehicle for that to happen....as "conversations that matter" becomes a household phrase!

From a very tender time in Miami...."

Juanita

"I encountered AoH at the Shambhala Institute in the summer of 2002, before it was yet named, when Juanita suggested that Marianne and Toke be given a space and time and people to play with. I'd like to name the Shambhala Institute as an incubator, but as importantly, as a beneficiary and co-learner with the AoH network and forms.

(note: It was named before as Monica told before, first in '99)

Also, the "Big Idea", that brave, exciting, huge plan of Zoe's which begat a small, intimate, magical weekend in Norfolk in 2002 might be a part of this story, but I will leave it to Tim and Toke to confirm that.

Love and a big smile to everyone."

Claudia

"I bow to the weavers of networks.

Harrison Owen has named different types of organization from reactive, over proactive to interactive and inspired organizations. Where the proactive might say "I did it" - the interactive would say "we did it!" and the inspired would say "no-body did it!" - it just happened.

I honour this network of connectors - weavers - seed holders - contributors etc. - each for your contribution. - Most of the time we are in the "nobody did it" place - and every now and then it feels good to say thanks to the weavers - initiators - seedholders etc. - because it is like seeing each one for what we give.

thank you all!
love"

Monica

"The question: "who are the first ones?" for me is answered: "our ancestors." What I see happening in the life of PeerSpirit and Art of Hosting and World Café and Open Space and AI is that we are all

engaged in a profound practice of remembering this piece of our social genetic wiring for inspired collaboration.

Ann and I speak two beliefs about circle over and over:

1. We did not design the circle, the circle designed us. Humanity was made by the circle, by the need to find ways to gather and sustain ourselves and come into agreements of socialization that allowed us to flourish into bigger and bigger units;
2. The circle was the paradigm shift at the foundations of our human evolution, and collaborative conversation is the paradigm shift again that will prevent our extinction. It calls us into practices of remembering ourselves that reattach us to recognition of each other and to skills of living with the earth, rather than this nightmarish attempt to dominate the earth.

Whenever we speak this, something happens in the room: an invocation is present. We are called into the archetype. The circle is the Metaform activated within all forms of hosting. I think what is making all of our hosting work so potent, so global, is that the archetype activates possibilities in us that we had not been aware of until the field starts to shimmer and shimmy and cook.

I appreciate how we are all willing to hold our contributions and donate them to the evolution of conversation itself. ... We are noticing that the structure, what we began calling "the bones of circle" when we introduced it at Hazelwood House, has held—and our learning of how to hold it has evolved and evolved and evolved.

Blessings on all our work and our dreams!"

Christina

"... I thank and acknowledge those of you who came long before I did to this field of practice for welcoming me and hosting me in its midst.

I am happy to be a grandchild of your work, vision and spontaneous creativity."

Chris

"I just want to express my gratitude and love to so many of you who have held & let go, in ebb & flow... for me to jump in, ride and splash around in the second wave of what has emerged from places and conversations of deep meaning that have also been part of my growing...
Thank you."

Tatiana

It has taken a lot of effort, trust and practice to host ourselves - each other and "THIS" to where it is at this point in the world - a learning journey I am very grateful for
and will treasure my whole life in what is left of it."
Toke

"I have come to feel that there is much waiting to be born in this world. I hear it in myself. I hear it in others. I sometimes hear it in the center. I sometimes hear it in the wind, or as I sit in the trees, or as I look up at the Wasatch Mountains that surround the valley in which I live. It is as if something wants to be channeled into another kind of existence.

There is no one channellor. And no one time. Together, I find I'm able to feel much more of the core of this, and then feel the immense freedom to co-create it in many forms and with many people. To hold this energy is sweet for me.

From a sunny Utah morning. Daffodils standing tall. Tulips working their way in."

Tenneson

all written March 2007

Ria Baeck